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THE DESTRUCTION OF SCOTTISH AGRICULTURE.

CHAPTER I.

TO THE TENANT FARMERS OF SCOTLAND.

Gentlemen,—You need not be reminded that a severe agricultural crisis exists throughout the whole of Great Britain, especially in some parts of the country, and more especially, perhaps, in East Lothian, which has for many years had the reputation of being the finest and most highly cultivated county in the kingdom. Of all this you are fully aware from **painful experience**. Only too well you know that changes of a most lamentable character have been taking place all around you for many years past. The men whom you knew in bygone days you now know no more; some of them are dead; some of them are worse than dead; others are living joyless lives in different parts of the world, whilst their children, who, under a juster system of land laws would now have been occupying their places, are strangers in a strange land. Almost every homestead in your country can tell stories of the most tragic description. The very earth seems to become vocal in condemnation of the ruthless oppression and the flagrant injustice which have for so long been practised upon your class. Even the very stones almost cry out against the tyranny which an evil land system has permitted to be practised. It is the common talk among you, as well as among those with whom you do business, that things are going from bad to worse, and the stoutest hearts are failing them for fear as the contingencies of the near future are contemplated. The finest portions of your land are being virtually depopulated. At a meeting of the East Lothian Farmers' Club the other day only **nine members put in an appearance**. Two of the oldest members were present, and expressed their regret that the attendance at their meetings had become so small. The Chairman (Mr. John Durie) said that **the country had become almost depopulated**, and that many of the farm-houses that used to be occupied were now untenanted, and that most of those who previously occupied

those houses were members of the Club. The tenant-farmer class which has **hitherto been one of England's glories**, a class the equal of which no other nation can produce, is being annihilated, and much of the land which they by their skill and industry brought to such a high condition of fertility is being allowed to lapse into an almost savage state.

From time to time you have made efforts to call public attention to this state of things. Some of the more far-seeing among you, as long ago as the year 1860, foretold what was likely to come. Their warnings were disregarded; their fears were ridiculed by the majority of their fellow tenants. A few, however, believed and acted, and, as the result has shown, not without success. These few, however, soon had to pay the penalty which landlords never fail to exact when they find courageous and independent men. Five of these gentlemen—Mr. Sadler, Mr. George Hope, Mr. John Russell, Mr. James M. Russell, and Mr. Hay, of Chapel, were evicted from their farms under circumstances of the grossest injustice. Mr. Hope, at the suggestion of two or three of the more advanced and independent tenant-farmers was brought forward as a candidate in the interests of his class. He was, unfortunately, unsuccessful, and this attempt to evoke the sympathy of the public in behalf of the farmers failed. **What was the consequence to Mr. Hope?** On account of the freedom with which he spoke of these matters, and especially because of his assuming the prominent position of a tenant-farmer candidate, he was very soon compelled to quit his farm. Virtually he was evicted because of his independence, and thousands of pounds of his capital were **confiscated by his landlord**. This also was true of the other men who were evicted. Mr. Hope's eviction caused a great stir throughout the country, Mr. James Howard, M.P., calling special attention to it in his place in Parliament. It was believed at that time that this case was the very worst that had happened, and it was vainly supposed that it was the worst that could happen. Events have proved that the latter view at any rate was not correct, for the case of Mr. James M. Russell, which will hereafter be referred to more particularly, surpasses even that of Mr. Hope in **downright cruelty and scandalous injustice**. One good effect, however, certainly followed on Mr. Hope's eviction; for it gave an impetus to the agitation which had even then been begun with the object of securing tenant right to the occupying farmer. Mr. James Howard brought in a Bill to amend the law affecting Landlord and Tenant, which, however, never got beyond the first reading.

The Beaconsfield Government was then in office, and it treated Mr. Howard's attempt to secure **justice to the farmers** with contempt. This is precisely what has commonly been done by all Governments up to this time, whether Liberal or Tory. Great credit is due to Mr. Howard for the persistency with which he has continued from that time to the present to endeavour to improve the condition of the farmers of Great Britain. The late Government of Mr. Gladstone passed the Agricultural Holdings Act, which, although an advance upon previous legislation, was still a seriously defective measure. Mr. Howard endeavoured to amend this Bill by securing the insertion of a provision giving to the tenant full compensation for such enhanced letting value of the farm as was due to his own outlay and skill, and which also would have secured stability of tenure. This amendment was lost. Another attempt made by Mr. Howard to improve the Bill fared no better. He endeavoured to induce Mr. Gladstone to make provision in the Bill for a re-valuation in the cases of existing leaseholders, but the British Parliament, with its extraordinary respect for what it chooses to call **freedom of contract**, looked upon Mr. Howard's amendment as **downright political heresy**. For the rejection of this suggestion Mr. Shaw-Lefevre, who was Mr. Gladstone's adviser on agricultural matters, was mainly responsible. If Mr. Howard's advice had been taken in regard to this point some of the most painful cases of failure and eviction which have taken place in Scotland during the last three years would have been avoided. Consequently a Liberal Government, which professed much concern for the farmers and great anxiety to remedy their wrongs, is responsible for these evictions. This action of the Gladstone Government was the more blameworthy, inasmuch as several men of great eminence and experience in agricultural matters, some of whom sat on a Commission in 1879, which reported in 1882, condemned the **enormous rents** which were being paid in Scotland owing to the operation of the **disastrous law of hypothec**. Mr. Clay, a Scotch agriculturist, who sat on this Commission, specially emphasised this point. He said, "The case is so urgent and pressing that **nothing less than a reduction of rent of from 20 to 30 per cent**, will save the present tenant from ruin, and of estates where the fatal policy of rack-renting has been adopted, in that case 35 per cent. will not meet the tenant's requirements. Evidence has also been given that rents have been unduly forced up by class laws, false and inflated competition; also by the letting of farms by tender

and screwing out of tenants more than what could honestly be paid from the produce of the soil"—with much more to the same effect. In spite of all this testimony, however, the Liberal Government was so **tender of the susceptibilities of the landlords** that it refused to afford any relief to these rack-rented, lease-bound farmers.

The question now is, What is to be done? What are you going to do? Unless you do something for yourselves it is useless to expect any speedy improvement in your condition. One of your leaders, Mr. Rae, President of the Scottish Farmers' Alliance, speaking of a deputation which had visited Mid and East Lothian—of which he was a member—said, "We heard incontestable evidence of a much worse state of things existing in these fine farming counties than we had ever before dreamed of. We believe that if all the cases of **hardship, tyranny, and terrorism** that have taken place under our present landed system could be embodied in a volume, such a storm of indignation would be evoked as would very speedily bring the oppressors and their reign to an ignoble and ignominious end." The question for you is, Are you prepared to help to raise this **storm of indignation**? Another of your number, Mr. Suart, of Inverfiddich, says: "The pressing question for the present is, How long is the present system to last? Just so long as men sit idly by folding their hands and looking on. All farmers cannot speak out; the great majority dare not, and yet it has been the proud boast of every Briton that he lives in a free country. It seems almost a mockery. **Free, indeed!** When we look down the roll of those who have advocated the case of right against might to find that they of all men have had to endure abuse and persecution, not unfrequently finding themselves ruined men." The time has come when **every farmer ought to put it to his own conscience** whether it is not his duty and whether it is not also expedient for him to take some share in the work which must now be done to save his class from utter extinction before it is too late. Your patience and forbearance in the past have been extraordinary. Mr. Asher, Solicitor-General for Scotland in the late Government, said that the process of allowing things to work right of themselves was often a very **slow and cruel one**. You have given this system a fair chance. Things do not right themselves naturally, nor are they ever likely to. **Things must be put right** by men who have a clear perception as to what the right is, and who have the courage to do it. If you had been less patient and enduring, probably your grievances would have been redressed

long ago. The Irish farmers followed a different method from that which you have pursued. In Ireland landlords were shot; outrages of a most revolting kind were committed upon both human beings and dumb animals; and lawlessness and rebellion were for some years rampant. But melancholy as this state of things was, it undoubtedly had the effect of calling the attention of the Legislature to the wrongs of Irish agriculturists. **To this Mr. Gladstone himself bears testimony.** Two great Land Bills have been passed in the interests of Ireland, the result being that the Irish tenant now has a fair rent fixed by a Land Court; he is guaranteed fixity of tenure; and he possesses freedom of sale as regards his tenant right. Far be it from me to advise the farmers of Scotland to imitate the action of farmers in Ireland. But without resorting to any illegitimate means of agitation there is ample scope, as well as urgent necessity, for an agitation conducted on a rational and lawful basis, but which shall be so determined in its character that it cannot be ignored. Mr. Forster stated in Bradford, in August, 1885, that **the murder of Lord Frederick Cavendish and of Mr. Burke saved Ireland.** We want to save Scotland, but without any murder or outrage; and this can certainly be done if all Scottish farmers who realise the gravity of this crisis will use that energy and dogged perseverance which are characteristic of them as a class. Professor Thorold Rogers compares the landowners to the old **freebooters who levied blackmail** on the farmers. He says, "The process by which the landowners have cleaned the farmer out of his capital is like the way in which the freebooters treated him, with this difference, that they have done him no service in return. They have drained him of his capital, cut his land up with their horses and dogs, and devoured his crops with their game, and finally have ruined him with their exactions." Has not this system been tolerated long enough? Is it not time to make a solemn vow that it shall speedily be brought to an end? What the farmers of Scotland really need is **legislation proceeding on the lines of the last Irish Land Bill.** It is essential that they should have a fair rent fixed, and it is the opinion of the men who have most deeply studied this question, including some of the first statesmen of the day,* that this will never be done until it is done by a Land Court. The farmer also requires stability of tenure, so that he shall no longer be at the mercy or the caprices of a landlord on the one hand, or be saddled with a long lease on the other hand. In addition to these two

* I have in my possession letters from such statesmen to this effect.

things he also needs entire freedom with respect to the disposal of his tenant right, thus securing full compensation for all the improvements he makes on his land. If these changes were brought about, Mr. James Howard's ideal would be reached, and the farmer could put his money into his farm with the same feeling of security as he could put it into a bank. If the farmers of Scotland are wise they will demand these changes as the very minimum which they will accept. Every candidate who asks their suffrages should be questioned in the most searching manner as to what he believes, and as to how he intends to act, in regard to these points. Let the farmers speak with united voice in making these demands, and the politicians of both parties will hesitate before alienating the support of so influential a class. It is the more necessary that the farmers of Scotland should speak with no uncertain tone because **their silence in the past** has conveyed the impression that they were not in earnest in seeking redress. Mr. Chamberlain recently paid a visit to Scotland, and in his speech at Inverness stated that **the farmers of Scotland were satisfied** with recent legislation on land. The Scottish Farmers' Alliance, however, at once took up Mr. Chamberlain's challenge, for such it virtually was, and sent him an address pointing out that he was in error. The Alliance also agreed to submit a series of questions to candidates who sought the support of agriculturists at the coming election. The questions were as follows:—"1. Would you be prepared to support a Land Bill providing for the institution of a Land Court, which should have power to fix a fair rent and the other conditions of occupancy? 2. Are you of opinion that it is desirable to have the land of this country distributed amongst a larger number of owners? and would you vote for a measure having this end in view? 3. Are you prepared to support a Bill providing for the appointment of popularly-elected County Boards who should have jurisdiction in all matters purely affecting the county? 4. Are you in favour of a county board so constituted, having power to compulsorily acquire land at a fair valuation for public purposes, or for allotment to labourers and others? 5. Are you in favour of the total abolition of the game laws?—and would you urge on a measure to obtain this? 6. Are you of opinion that the area of deer forests ought to be limited, and would you be prepared to support a measure seeking to obtain this? 7. Are you prepared to support a Bill seeking to equalise the duty payable for succession to movables? 8. Are you in favour of the total abolition of the laws of entail and primogeniture? 9. Are you

in favour of cheapening the transfer of land?" These questions indicate that the leaders of the Scottish farmers fully realise that it is of no use tinkering with this question any longer, and that nothing short of drastic and radical reform will meet the case. Let the Scottish farmers, as a body, follow their leaders, and demand that every candidate, whatever his politics, who seeks their vote shall pledge himself to support these legislative changes.

CHAPTER II.

TO THE PEOPLE OF SCOTLAND

Agriculture is the chief industry of the nation. Do you doubt this? Carefully consider the following facts:—Mr. Goschen, speaking at Manchester in June, 1885, said, "The profits assessed on land (under schedule A on land alone, and under schedule B on farming profits) amount to £140,000,000. Compare the vastness of that industry with the iron ore works, where the profits are £3,000,000. You will see how any blow that falls upon the agricultural interest of this country must have its effect throughout the whole country. There are a vast number of subsidiary trades—implement makers, manure importers, seedsmen, waggon makers, merchants, and retail trades which supply the farmers, and you will see that all these great industries suffer when there is a bad harvest." The estimated yield of wheat is 30 bushels to the acre, and on this reckoning the yield for 2,478,318 acres, which was the area sown with wheat in Great Britain this year, gives a total crop of 8,947,650. Adding the 70,874 acres in Ireland, and the 5,660 acres in the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands the total crop of wheat comes out at 9,223,710 quarters, of which a million quarters will be needed for seed, leaving 8,224,000 for sale. Reckoning 33s. per quarter as the average value of the above crop, we get £13,569,600 as the sum **added by the wheat harvest** to the wealth of the nation. Mr. James Howard, M.P., says that the annual value of our fields and homesteads is estimated at from £250,000,000 to £300,000,000 sterling, whilst the value of the agricultural and pastoral land of the United Kingdom is computed at the enormous sum of two thousand millions. It is easy to see how anything that injures such an industry as this must also injure every industry in the nation. Townspeople often fall into the error of supposing that **bad harvests and bad land laws** are matters which affect only the farmers, and those who are said to be directly interested in land, whereas the real truth is

that every class in the nation, and every trade in the nation, must suffer with agriculture. This being the case, it behoves **dwellers in towns** as well as those who live in the country to earnestly demand that this subject of land reform shall be at once taken in hand by Parliament.

Another fault of townspeople is that they are often actuated by a spirit of **hostility towards agriculturists**. Farmers believe, and not altogether without reason, that their countrymen of the trading and professional classes are indifferent to their sufferings. This is surely an unfortunate state of things. It has been one of the distinctive glories of England, and one source of her strength, that she has had the class of men known as **tenant-farmers**. It is a distinct gain to the nation from every point of view, that it should retain such a class, and if townspeople by their apathy, or by their hostility towards farmers should help to annihilate this class, they will inflict an **irreparable injury** upon the nation.

There is an idea very common among people who live in towns that **farmers do not deserve** very much consideration, because they have never really been in earnest in seeking to improve their position. No doubt there is some truth in this in regard to many—perhaps a majority—of the farmer class. It cannot be denied that they have been, as a whole, far too **subservient to the landlords**, and far too patient under tyranny and oppression of the most abominable kind. On the other hand, however, it must be remembered that there have always been some tenant-farmers of an entirely opposite kind. These men have stood forth to demand the redress of the wrongs from which farmers suffered, and to claim the rights to which they were entitled, and when such men did take up this position the people of the towns failed to support them. The case of Mr. George Hope has already been referred to. He was ruined chiefly because he ventured to become a tenant-farmer's candidate. The case of Mr. Russell teaches the same lesson. The farmer who has dared to show a spirit of independence has been ruthlessly crushed by the landlords, who up to this time have been in possession of powers which enabled them summarily to **punish every tenant** of this description. These are facts which should be borne in mind by the general public when they are disposed to condemn farmers for their supineness and lack of earnestness. What is really needed is that the electors of the towns should make the case of the farmers, which is really the case of the whole people, their own, and demand from every candidate such a profession of faith on

this subject as will satisfy them that he is an **out and out land reformer**. The agricultural labourers are now nearly all voters. How are they going to use their vote? To perpetuate the **malign influence of landlordism**? Surely not. If the labourers are wise they will rally to the support of the farmers, who have been, and will be, far better friends to them than the landlords. Let the labourers and the farmers unite their efforts to secure a thoroughly just land system, and there are bright and prosperous times in store for the country yet.

CHAPTER III.

TO THE POLITICIANS OF SCOTLAND.

The attitude which has been assumed towards the land question by politicians of both parties is calculated to raise very serious misgivings as to the fitness of either one of them to take any worthy part in the government of the nation. The dexterity with which they manage to **evade every vital issue** that is before the nation is simply astonishing. They talk on any and every subject but the right subject. They organise large meetings and get up a great show of enthusiasm in regard to matters concerning which the people, as a whole, are for the most part indifferent. Disestablishment, Local Government reform, Free Education, and numerous other subjects are discussed over and over again with **wearisome iteration**, while the land question, which is the most urgent of all, which is indeed a matter of life and death, not merely to the farmers, but to the whole community, is touched in the most vague and gingerly fashion. Mr. Chamberlain, Mr. Goschen, Mr. Balfour Lord George Hamilton, and other politicians on both sides, have given addresses in Scotland within the last few weeks, but their speeches give no evidence whatever that they are alive to the gravity of the present agricultural crisis. These political Neroes go on fiddling whilst Rome is burning. Farmers are being ruined by scores; counties are being reduced almost to desolation; labourers are being driven off the land; tradesmen are becoming bankrupts in the towns; commercial depression everywhere prevails as well as agricultural depression; and yet all these so-called statesmen go on with their **academic discussions** thoroughly heedless of these facts. Liberals are no better than Tories in this respect, or very little better; nor are they likely to be unless the people take up the matter in good earnest. A large and representative Liberal conference was held at Perth on October 16th, under the auspices of the

Scottish Liberal Association. Will it be believed that in the very midst of such an agricultural crisis as the present **no place was found on the programme of this conference for the land question?** Mr. James Findlater, of Balveny, Dufftown, complained that the programme of the conference was limited to two questions—viz., Local Option and Disestablishment, and he added: "A question that was chiefly interesting a great number of the electors of this country was the land question. You have called us down here from our **frosted corn and ruined farms** and say, let us consider the Church question and Local Option. What care we for Local Option or the Church question." Of course Mr. Findlater meant that these two questions, important as they are, are not of such pressing urgency as the land question. And he was right. How can it be expected that farmers will be enthusiastic in their support, even of Liberal reformers, when they **ignore land reform** in this manner? It is true that at a public meeting held in connection with this conference a resolution was passed in favour of reforms in local government and in the laws relating to the tenure and transfer of land. That, however, was the only reference to land reform in the official programme of this conference. **What miserable mockery this is!** Mr. R. B. Haldane, Liberal candidate for East Lothian, in which county, perhaps, the depression is more severe than in any other, did in his speech refer to the land question, but only to say, "They did not seek the introduction of land courts, and the principles and machinery of the Irish Land Act." It is difficult to discover what qualification this gentleman has to represent such an agricultural constituency as that of East Lothian. The Scottish Farmers' Alliance, as we have seen, affirm that it is only by the introduction of land courts that any improvement can be effected, and yet Mr. Haldane avows himself an opponent of this reform.

Of course it is easy to understand why our **aspiring, time-serving politicians** are so anxious to relegate this question into the background. They know very well that this question of reforming the land laws will **shiver our political parties** into atoms, and they are anxious to put off the evil day as long as possible. A large proportion of the Liberals are Whigs, and in regard to the land question **Whigs and Tories are virtually one.** They will stand or fall together, and we may expect in the immediate future, or as soon as ever this land question is firmly grappled with, some rather **startling coalitions** between our political parties. Natural laws, however,

are stronger than political strategy, and those laws are surely forcing on the land question to a settlement at a very rapid rate. The voice of the people, moreover, is stronger than the will of **self-seeking or indolent statesmen**, and ere long that voice will demand with an emphasis and resolution that cannot be mistaken that this land question shall be taken in hand in an earnest spirit, and settled on such a basis as will be conducive to the welfare, not of any privileged class, but of the entire nation. If politicians of either party are wise to perceive their opportunity, and to improve it, they may not only render immense service to the nation, but also to themselves. The party which is the first to deal with this question, in a spirit becoming its gravity, will earn the gratitude and secure the support of the people as a whole, although it may excite the implacable hatred of the men who fatten on the present anomalous and mischievous condition of things. This question is now **approaching its crisis**. Things cannot much longer go on as they are now doing. It would not require many more caces like that of Mr. Russell to create a spirit of rebellion which it might be very difficult to curb. Some people are firmly convinced that retribution in the shape of a **terrible revolution** must come upon the nation as the result of its indifference and evil-doing in the past. This, however, is a pessimistic view. There is time to **avert a revolution**, but the time in which it will be possible to do that is fast passing away. A few more years and it will be impossible. Will our statesmen be wise in time? They will if they are educated by the people, and not otherwise.

ELECTORAL PROSPECTS IN SCOTLAND.

WE gave a day or two ago a carefully compiled forecast of electoral prospects in Ireland; we supplement this to-day by a similar forecast for Scotland.

In the virtually defunct Parliament of 1880 Scotland was represented by 60 members, 32 sitting for counties, 26 for boroughs, and 2 for universities. In the Parliament of 1886 Scotland will be represented by 72 members, 39 sitting for counties, 31 for boroughs, and 2 for universities. Of the original 60 at the close of the late session, 51 were Liberals and 9 Conservatives. Finally, of this minority of 9, 7 represented counties or divisions of counties; one, Mr. J. A. Campbell, represented the Universities of Glasgow and Aberdeen; and one, Sir John Hay, represented the Wigtown district of burghs. As the Wigtown district has been swept away by the Redistribution of Seats Act, such strength as Conservatism retains north of the Tweed is to be found in the counties. The Reform Acts of 1884-1885 leave the basis of the representation in the Scottish burghs and universities untouched; but the enactment of household suffrage all over the country, and the abolition of faggot voting, have revolutionised the electoral rolls of Scottish counties.

In one of his recent speeches, Mr. Chamberlain commented on the remarkable increase that has been made to the register in Stirlingshire, the polling power of which has risen from 3,442 in 1884 to 12,480 in 1885. The increase in other Scotch counties is not less extraordinary. The most gallant and successful stand made against Liberal reaction by Scottish Conservatism in 1880 was in Ayrshire; the Tory candidates for both the North and the South division were carried, and by majorities of 55 and 247 respectively. But the electoral roll in North Ayrshire has risen from 3,858 to 12,402, and in South Ayrshire from 4,074 to 14,853; in other words, the constituency of Ayrshire has been more than tripled. In 1880, Mr. Orr Ewing, member for Dumbartonshire, retained his seat only by a majority of 9 in a total poll of 2,657; but who can forecast the result of an election in that county next November, when the electorate has increased from 3,268 to 9,905? For the first time the political influence of the Highland Crofters is about to be effectually exercised in a general election—how effectually may be vaguely guessed, but cannot be accurately calculated, from such facts as that in Ross and Cromarty the register shows an increase from 1,732 in 1884 to 8,382 in 1885, and in Sutherlandshire from 374 to 2,679.

It is generally admitted by Scottish Conservatives, and in spite of the announcement made at their annual conference in Glasgow a few days ago, that forty-seven supporters of Lord Salisbury were to be brought forward as candidates in the North, that they have no reasonable hope of carrying more than two of the 31 burgh seats in the North, except through Liberal divisions that shall have proved incurable when the polling day comes. The Ayr burghs returned the Conservative candidate in 1874; there is the faintest possibility that they may do so in November should anything occur to render Lord Salisbury's Administration temporarily popular. There is an equally faint possibility that in the North-western division of Edinburgh, where the Conservatism is socially strong and is represented by an influential candidate, it may be victorious. In the other burghs, or divisions of burghs, Conservatives can be successful only if the Liberals do not close their ranks. At Aberdeen, the other day, Lord Iddesleigh, greatly daring, predicted the return of Mr. Colin McKenzie, the Conservative candidate for the North division of that city. Aberdeen is probably the most Radical of Scotch constituencies. Mr. W. A. Hunter, the accepted Liberal candidate for its North division, has shown by his recent speeches that his politics are advanced enough even for it. Mr. McKenzie's only chance of success, therefore, is to be found in Liberal opposition for personal or other reasons to Mr. Hunter. Similarly, there may be a slight chance for a Conservative candidate in the Kirkcaldy burghs, in the Montrose burghs, or in the St. Rollox division of Glasgow, in each of which constituencies originally three Liberals confronted each other. But strenuous efforts will be made between the present time and the General Election to bring about Liberal union throughout Scotland. Mr. Chamberlain preached it as the first of parliamentary duties when in Glasgow and Inverness. Mr. Gladstone will preach to the same effect, and with even more weight, should he conduct a third Midlothian campaign this month; union is the burden of his Manifesto, which may be either the prelude to, or a substitute for, another series of platform efforts. The retirement of Mr. Hume Webster, one of the three Liberal candidates for the Angus district of burghs, whose simultaneous appearance tempted Lord Iddesleigh's friend, Dr. Mackie, to take the field in the Conservative interest, may be followed in other constituencies. So weak is burgh Conservatism in Scotland that, in Dundee, where Liberal candidatures are springing up like mushrooms, in Inverness,

and in the Southern division of Edinburgh, where a moderate Liberal is opposed by a more advanced politician, no leader of a Tory forlorn hope has yet made an appearance that is looked upon as serious. In the meantime Mr. Goschen seems likely to be returned for the North-eastern division of Edinburgh without a contest. Whatever opposition is threatened to him comes not from Conservatives but from dissatisfied Liberals. Lumping all reasonable probabilities together, the Scottish Conservatives will not carry at the outside, more than two burgh seats in November.

The majority of the nominally sitting Conservative members for Scottish counties are personally quite as popular as their Liberal colleagues. If, therefore, a clean sweep is made of them at the General Election, that will be due, not to their demerits, but to the pronounced Liberalism of the crowd of new agricultural voters. From a variety of causes, including the personal and class grievances mentioned by the Rev. George Brooks in a recent article in the "*Pall Mall Gazette*," these have taken up an attitude of resolute opposition to the landed interest. The recent declaration of the farm servants of Aberdeenshire in favour of a most advanced political programme, including a sweeping reform of the land laws, is one sign of the times. The frank advocacy, within the last few days, by candidates for agricultural constituencies, like Mr. Reid in Dumbartonshire and Mr. McLean in Buteshire, of the abolition of the existing House of Lords—and that in spite of the plea for "the principle of birth" urged in Mr. Gladstone's Manifesto—is another equally significant sign. It is the new voters in the counties rather than the old voters in the burghs that appear to be enamoured of free education, religious equality, local government, and the other planks in the platform of the Liberals who met in conference in Glasgow on the occasion of Mr. Chamberlain's visit.

In the counties, as in the burghs, hopes of Conservative success are based on Liberal dissensions, existing or in prospect. Thus it is possible that Inverness-shire may be lost to the Liberal party if the Conservative candidate finds himself confronted on the day of election, both by a Liberal and by a Crofters' candidate. What is true of Inverness-shire may be true of Ross and Cromarty, of Sutherlandshire, of Caithness, of every county, in short, where the Crofter question divides the rural voters into Moderates and Extremists. In some districts, also—notably in one of the divisions of Aberdeenshire—some Liberals are dissatisfied with the general politics of the sitting members, as not being "robust" enough, and are endeavouring to induce them to retire in favour of candidates that are more to their mind. But no effort will be spared within the next few weeks to heal differences on agrarian or ordinary political questions. It was the feasible rather than the fanciful in Highland land reform that Mr. Chamberlain urged on his Inverness audience a few days ago. Exertions are being privately and publicly made to induce Highland constituencies to be content with candidates who accept generally the doctrines which found favour at the Glasgow conference to the effect that "the special circumstances of the Highlands and Islands call for immediate legislation," and that "the basis of such legislation should be a provision for restoring the arable and pasture lands to the people on reasonable terms, along with such facilities as are provided for in the Irish Land and Purchase Acts of last Parliament." Even if these attempts to close the Liberal ranks are only partially successful, it is probable that, of the thirty-nine county seats in Scotland, only two will fall to the Conservatives. Finally, supposing that the two University constituencies return Conservatives, which is probable, sixty-six of the ninety-two members that will represent Scotland in the new Parliament will be Liberals. Of

these not fewer than sixty will support a measure for the disestablishment ultimately or immediately of the Church of Scotland. Again, fifty-six will be Radicals, and ten "Moderate" Liberals.

Pall Mall Gazette, Oct. 2nd.

ELECTORAL PROSPECTS IN SCOTLAND.

To the Editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

Sir,—I read with much pleasure the interesting forecast on "Electoral Prospects in Scotland," which appears in your issue of to-day. In my judgment the writer is perfectly accurate in saying that "the new agricultural voters" have "taken up an attitude of resolute opposition to the landed interest." This agrees with all my information on the subject. The farm servants of Aberdeenshire are by no means singular in desiring a sweeping reform of the land laws. It may be that the labourers will yet save the farmers (or such of them as have escaped ruin), who, as I pointed out in your columns the other day, have been, and still are, far too subservient to their landlords. It must in fairness, however, be admitted that the majority of the farmers are in a difficult position, as they are largely in the power of the landlords, who do not hesitate to use their giants' strength in the most tyrannous fashion whenever they find a tenant who dares to be independent. With the labourers it is otherwise, and they will surely take their revenge in the coming election. I have had an opportunity of observing the disposition which animates the labourers: many of whom are burning with indignation at the way in which their masters have been treated by the landlords. The arbitrary and cruel action of the latter will surely bring upon them deserved retribution. It is a lamentable fact that the Liberals of Scotland should be so indifferent to the sufferings of the farmers, who have been staunch supporters of their cause.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Pall Mall Gazette, Oct. 7th.

GEORGE BROOKS.

CHAPTER IV.

TO THE JOURNALISTS OF SCOTLAND.

A free Press is one of the greatest blessings of a nation. It is a palladium of liberty; it is a bulwark of truth: it is an enemy of injustice and oppression. But, in order to be all this, it must be **free in reality**, and not merely in name. When the **Press is muzzled** by the power of capitalists or landlords it is not really free. And this is very largely the condition of the Press of Great Britain to-day. Every man who has taken up the cause of the injured, and who has endeavoured to secure justice to the wronged, knows how almost impossible it is to induce any editor to allow a word to be spoken through his columns which would be likely to offend men in high places. We had a significant illustration of this a few months ago in some notorious cases which occurred in London. A woman named Jeffries, who was a notorious keeper of disorderly houses in London, and whose patrons were royal and aristocratic per-

sonages, was brought before the Middlesex magistrates on a charge of keeping such houses. Before the case came on for trial certain arrangements were made which turned her trial into a mere farce. It was arranged that a fine should be inflicted, which in the case of such a woman was no punishment at all. A more flagrant **outrage on justice** was never known. All the facts of the case were well known to the editors of our leading London newspapers. Did they mention them? No. Why? Because they were **afraid of offending men of title and position**, who wielded great influence. And yet these men boast that they conduct a free Press! In connection with this very Jeffries' case, Mr. Minahan, an inspector of police in London, was degraded and virtually dismissed from the force, because he made a report to his superiors on the houses of Mrs. Jeffries. Because he had the courage to refuse bribes at the hands of this woman, and to do his duty as an officer of the law, he was punished by his own superior officers. He lost his pension, and was reduced to the direst poverty. Efforts were made by earnest and influential men to secure redress for Minahan. Attention was called to the case in Parliament more than once, and yet Sir William Harcourt, the Home Secretary, declined to lift a finger on Minahan's behalf. All the facts of this case were known to the editors of our principal newspapers, and they were urged to say a word in behalf of this wronged and suffering man. Did they do it? No. Why? For the same reason as before; they dare not offend the great. A very similar case was that known as the Poole perjury case, in connection with which an ex-detective, named Henry Williams, was sent to seven years' penal servitude by Baron Huddleston, although it is morally certain that he was innocent of the charge imputed to him. A committee was formed in London to secure the reversal of the sentence. Petitions were sent to the Home Secretary, signed by a majority of the householders of Poole, and frequent appeals were made to the Home Secretary by members of Parliament. In this case, also, it was with the greatest difficulty that any editor could be induced to allow a word to be said on the subject, and even when they did allow it, it was only in the shape of a bare report of facts.

These cases are mentioned merely to illustrate the point that the Press of Great Britain, much as it boasts of its freedom and independence, is not in reality either free or independent. It is to a considerable extent **shackled either by evil traditions** or by the powerful hand of men in places of power. The same difficulty has been experienced in relation to the case of the

suffering Scotch farmers. The leading papers of Scotland have either ignored these sufferings altogether or have made them the subject of ridicule. In this kind of work the *Scotsman* has gained an unenviable notoriety. It would be impossible to find a single farmer in Scotland who would say that his class owe anything to the *Scotsman*. And yet the *Scotsman* claims to be the leading Liberal paper of Scotland. Much the same may be said of the other great Scottish daily papers. Even the *North British Daily Mail*, of which Dr. Cameron, M.P., who is a somewhat advanced land reformer, is proprietor, has spoken on the question only in "bated breath and with whispering humbleness." Moreover, the local journals, whose subscribers are largely of the farming class, have not dared to open their mouths on this question for fear of offending the man at the great house. It was not until two London journals, the *Christian Commonwealth* and the *Pall Mall Gazette*, had made a bold and vigorous statement on the whole subject that the Scottish papers dared to utter a word. Surely these facts are discreditable in the extreme to the Scottish Press. Silence under all the circumstances was **little less than criminal**, while very little credit can be given even for outspoken speech when it comes too late to be of service. How much better it would have been if from the very first the Scottish editors had shown a disposition, not to express rash opinions, but simply to give publicity to the facts? What honour it would have conferred upon them if they had so acted as to convince the Scottish people that they were the friends of truth and righteousness, and the enemies of every form of wrong and injustice!

Will Scottish journalists, even at the eleventh hour, learn wisdom? Will they, by their love of inquiry and by their honest treatment of the facts, prove themselves to be what they ought to be—moulders and guides of public opinion? They ought to be in the position of leading opinion, and not following it.

CHAPTER V.

TO THE CHRISTIAN MINISTERS OF SCOTLAND.

The writer of this being himself a Christian minister, ventures in that capacity to say a word to the ministers of the Gospel in Scotland. He does so in the hope of being able to induce them to take a more practical and active interest in the condition of agriculture in their own land. There is a widespread conviction among the tenant-farmers of Scotland that

their ministers have not shown such sympathy with them in their sufferings as they might have done, and especially that they have not denounced the inhumanity and tyranny which have been inflicted upon many farmers under the **technical forms of justice**. Cases like that of Mr. Russell, though not so extreme, have not been uncommon during the past 25 years; but very rarely has any condemnation of these evictions been heard from a Christian pulpit. It is true that some action has been taken in connection with one or two of the Presbyterian bodies. Committees have been appointed, and in an informal way discussions have taken place in relation to agricultural affairs. But there has not been heard from the Christian ministers of Scotland, as a body, any thorough discussion of the land question, or any earnest demand for a reform in the land laws. Probably many ministers would reply to this that it is no part of their duty to engage in such discussions. This, however, is a mistaken view. Their duty is to do justly and love mercy, and as far as their influence goes to endeavour also to secure for others merciful and just treatment. They ought ever to be the foremost in every conflict against oppression. They ought to be known everywhere as the **friends of the weak** and the down-trodden. A few ministers have gained honourable distinction by their action on this question. Chief among these perhaps is the Rev. David Macrae, of Dundee, who has preached and lectured on the land question and expounded the principles of Christianity as they apply to this subject. Mr. Macrae has also denounced in the severest terms the action of Mr. Russell's landlords. It would be well if more ministers of the Gospel had Mr. Macrae's courage and breadth of view, and if, instead of preaching so much **hard and empty theology**, they would deal with the life and death questions which so vitally affect the condition of their hearers. I have myself received letters from eminent ministers in Scotland, which breathe the same spirit as Mr. Macrae has shown in his public utterances. If these ministers would only speak out in public as they do in private, regardless of all the consequences, they would do much to secure a speedy and equitable settlement, not only of the land question, but of many other social problems. **Why do they not thus speak out?** Surely they ought to be above the fear of men. Statesmen may be worshippers of expediency, may truckle to the prejudices of the rich or pander to the passions of the populace, but men who preach the Gospel of Christ ought to be raised infinitely above such contemptible

considerations as these. The words of one of the most eminent of their number, Dr. Norman Macleod, might well serve as their motto:—

“ Perish policy and cunning,
Perish all that fears the light,
Whether losing, whether winning,
Trust in God and do the right.”

If all Christian ministers were to act on this principle, their influence for good would be increased a hundredfold. It is something to be thankful for that even a few of them are willing to do this. But why should it be a few only? The influence of the Christian ministry would be immensely increased if every tenant-farmer in the Lowlands, and every crofter in the Highlands, was able to look up to the ministers of his district as his best friends, as men who were willing to help him to assert his rights, whatever might be the consequences to themselves. Is it any wonder that the people are **estranged from Christianity** when they are taught by the example of ministers to believe that Christianity means siding with the strongest and courting the favour of the wealthy? The people never will accept Christianity unless it is placed before them in all its purity and simplicity, as well as lived out in the lives of its professors, and especially in the lives of its preachers. The ministers of Scotland, if they wish to strengthen their hold upon the hearts of the people, must show themselves to be **the people's friends**, not irrespective of considerations of right or wrong, but they should **stand with the people for the rights of the people**, as against the might of the privileged few. There are some signs appearing which indicate that the ministers of Scotland are beginning to realise their duty in these matters a little more clearly.

CHAPTER VI.

PARTICULARS OF THE CASE OF MR. JAMES M. RUSSELL.

Mr. Russell is widely known throughout Scotland as one of the most skilful and extensive farmers in the country. He began farming in 1850, with a very considerable capital. He belongs to a family which has been established in the Lothians since 1810. His first farm was Coalston-mains, in the parish of Haddington, which belongs to the Right Hon. Robert Bourke, Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs. This farm Mr. Russell occupied for 19 years, during which time, by his skill and capital, he

raised it to a high condition of fertility, thus increasing its value by 50 per cent. A renewal of the lease was refused to him, except on conditions as to game preservation which would have been simply ruinous, and which no farmer in his senses would ever agree to. In other words, Mr. Russell, after expending his money on this farm, and after suffering immense damage from game during his lease, for which he could get no compensation, was **evicted, in fact**, though not in form, and the capital which he had put into the farm was confiscated by the landlord. On leaving Coalston-mains Mr. Russell took the farm he now occupies, Greendykes, which appeared to him to be the best that could be obtained, after a search extending over several years, along with another farm, named Barneyhill, near Dunbar, the latter being held on a seven years' lease. The rent of this farm of Greendykes, as of every other farm at that time, had been forced up to a fictitious point by the operation of the **infamous law of Hypothec**, a law which had been devised entirely in the interests of the landlords. The rent was £3 12s. per acre. Of course, the farm was not really worth this money, and yet it could not be procured for less owing to the way in which the law of Hypothec enabled the landlords to rack-rent their tenants. It is easy enough to say now, as many persons do say, that Mr. Russell ought never to have agreed to pay such a rent, but the same thing might be said of every farmer who took land at that time. Mr. Russell had been brought up an agriculturist. That was the one thing he understood, and he wished, of course, to direct his skill and capital into that channel. No doubt it would have been far better for him if he had taken his ability and money to some other country, and used them there; but he preferred to stay in his native land. He was already approaching middle life, and was not in the most robust health, and therefore thought it would be easier to stay in a country which he understood than to risk his fortunes in a strange land. It is proverbially easy to be wise after the event, and certain gentlemen who sit in their easy chairs and play the part of critics, find it very easy to say that the Scotch farmers should have seen all that was coming, and have protected themselves against it. Criticism of that kind, however, is as absurd as it is uncharitable. Mr. Russell did the best he could do under the circumstances then existing, and acted in accordance with the best advice he could obtain from practical agriculturists.

For ten years Mr. Russell paid **this enormous rent in full**. Some of these years were memorable as being most disastrous

to farmers, especially the year 1877, when many of them were ruined. During that year Mr. Russell lost £3,000 on one of his farms, and yet paid his rent in full. During these years large abatements of rent were given by almost every landlord to the tenants; Mr. Russell, however, asked no abatement.

The farm of Barneyhill was taken in 1872 at a rent of £5 12s. per acre, the soil being peculiarly fine. This rent Mr. Russell paid in full to the end of the lease, which, however, did not prevent the landlord, Sir William Miller, M.P. for Berwickshire, from desiring an increase of rent at the end of the term. Mr. Russell declined to bid for the farm under the circumstances in which it was offered to him, and it was let to another tenant at an increase of 8s. per acre. It afterwards transpired that Sir William Miller, although a Liberal, had practically let the farm over the head of Mr. Russell to a Tory, and that his offer of the farm to Mr. Russell was really only a pretence. Mr. Russell then took the farm of Dolphinston, which he still occupies at a rent of £3 16s. per acre. This rent also he paid in full, as well as that of Greendykes, up to and including 1882.

About this time the prospects of agriculture became more and more serious, and much concern was excited in the minds of leading agriculturists, as well as tenant-farmers in consequence. Mr. Russell represented to the agents of both his landlords that in the circumstances he was compelled to seriously consider his position, and intimated that a **readjustment of the rent** was not only desirable, but essential, if he was to continue to occupy the farms. He did not, in specific terms, ask for an abatement of rent even then, but simply told the agents that some change must be made. In support of this he not only adduced the opinions of such men as Mr. Chaplin and Mr. Clay, but he laid open his books for the inspection of his landlords, thus proving to them that he had **exhausted his capital** in paying what was admittedly a rack-rent in full. His representations did not meet with a very ready response. Nothing was done for some time, the matter being held in abeyance for some 18 months, although Mr. Russell was given to understand that there was a disposition to meet him fairly at the end of that time. Down to the 28th July, 1885, Mr. Russell was led to believe that he would be treated reasonably and honourably; indeed, on this date, Dr. Anderson Kirkwood, of Glasgow, the agent for Greendykes farm, stated in the presence of Mr. Russell's agent, and some of his friends, that an arrangement would be made by which the arrears would be settled, and he would be continued in the farm. This action

was owing to a report which was made by their valuer, who had re-valued the farm—in the landlord's interest, of course—and who stated that Mr. Russell's farm was rented a third higher than it ought to have been. In other words, it was admitted that the landlords had received from Mr. Russell, during the term of his lease, over £4,000 more than they ought to have done. It should be observed that harvest was close at hand, and there was every reason to suppose that large crops would be reaped on Mr. Russell's land. The subsequent action of Dr. Kirkwood seems to convey the idea that Mr. Russell was being **deluded into a false security** until the time came when his crops could be seized, and his farms could be taken from him in first-class condition. Within a week after Dr. Kirkwood made the statement just referred to, which was fair and satisfactory to all parties, Mr. Russell received notice that he would be sequestered, and the sequestration was actually carried into effect. What is to be thought of the conduct of a man who could act as Dr. Kirkwood acted in regard to this matter? In addition to this, however, the agents proceeded to greater lengths still, for they took measures to make Mr. Russell a common bankrupt, evidently with the view of bringing upon him utter ruin, and degrading him as much as possible in the eyes of his neighbours, and this in spite of the fact that his accountant assured them that he had enough to pay everybody 20s. in the pound, and have a surplus for himself. It may here be stated that lawyers are regarded by the farmers of Scotland as natural enemies. The farmers believe that the lawyers have no objection to see tenants ruined and giving up their leases, because all this makes legal business. It was stated the other day that the Edinburgh Liberals had refused to accept a lawyer as a parliamentary candidate. It is a pity that all constituencies do not act in the same way. Only two lawyers were sent to Parliament from all Scotland in the election of 1880, and it is to be hoped that the number will not be increased in the next election. It is useless to expect cheap justice while so many lawyers are sent to Parliament. What makes the action of Mr. Archibald Hay Tennent, the owner of Greendykes, and Dr. Kirkwood, his agent, **all the more infamous** is that they both profess to be Liberals and Nonconformists. Mr. Russell also is a Liberal and Nonconformist. It would have been bad enough if he had been treated in this way, as many others have been, by Tories and Established Churchmen, but it is certainly worse that he should be **so treated by men who profess the same political and religious**

opinions. In addition to this Dr. Kirkwood is a prominent religious leader in the city of Glasgow. What have the Free Churchmen and the Liberals of Scotland to say to the **action of Mr. Tennent and Dr Kirkwood**? If they are worthy of the name of Christians and Liberals, they will mark the conduct of these men in a way that will never be forgotten; they will brand it as an infamy and a crime. It is a marvel that men who have treated such a man as Mr. Russell in this way dare again venture to show their faces before an assembly of Christians or Liberals in Scotland.

There can be no doubt that Mr. Russell is being sacrificed for the same reason as Mr. George Hope was sacrificed. **He dares to be independent**; he dares to have convictions; and he dares to give utterance to them both on the platform and through the Press. This in the eyes of landlords is an unpardonable sin. It is for the people of Scotland to say whether this sort of thing is to be allowed to go on; whether they will continue to see the most sturdy and upright men in their country made the victims of selfishness and cruelty. It is not credible that they will. They have been inactive hitherto, because they have not fully understood the facts. Let them once clearly recognise what enormous power the present iniquitous law throws into the hands of the landlords, and how unscrupulously the landlords use that power, and they will soon demand such changes in the law as will give the tenant security for his capital and stability of tenure. At the time of writing this, it seems exceedingly probable that Mr. Russell will have to leave his farms, and that the capital he has invested in them, amounting to some £15,000, will be seized by the landlords, and that he will walk out practically ruined. It is the universal opinion of men who understand agriculture that there never was so **gross and scandalous a case** as this. It is worse even than that of Mr. Hope, which created so great a sensation about twelve years ago, for Mr. Hope went out at the end of his lease with a considerable amount of money. Possibly, however, it may prove to be a worse thing for the landlords than for Mr. Russell. The writer of this has abundant evidence to prove that some of the first statesmen in the country and some of the largest landowners too **in the country**, are positively in a **state of terror** over this case of Mr. Russell. They see clearly enough that such a case as this presents in a manner which at once strikes the public mind, the **worst features of landlordism**. It embodies the evils of the system in a concrete form, which **can be at once grasped by the people**. One fact like this is

likely to create a deeper impression on the public mind than whole volumes written on the land laws. It may safely be asserted that it will be very difficult, if not impossible, for any landlord in Scotland hereafter to treat a tenant as Mr. Russell is being treated. Every great reform has its martyrs. It is as true now as it was in the time of Christ, that it is "expedient that one man die for the people." One thing which has sustained Mr. Russell in his trial is the conviction that good was to come to others out of the evil that has been done to him. He is one of the men who believe in Providence, who have faith in God; and he sees—as others see—that bad seasons, combined with the **infatuation of the landlords**, are hastening on those changes which are so imperatively needed, but which would have been delayed for many years longer had it not been for these two causes.

CHAPTER VII.

MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS AND CORRESPONDENCE.*

(Copy)

IMPORTANT SEQUESTRATION CASE.

HADDINGTON SHERIFF COURT.

Tennent's Trustees v. Maxwell.

This case, raising an important point under the law of urban Hypothec, and illustrating the harshness of the law in the present instance, arose out of the following circumstances:—The Pursuers are proprietors of the estate and mansion-house of St. Germain's. In the spring of 1878 the defender, who is proprietor of the estate of Gribton, in Dumfriesshire, entered into negotiations with the pursuers through their Glasgow agents, and ultimately took a lease of the mansion-house, policies, and garden of St. Germain's, with the game on the estate, for three years from Whit Sunday, 1878, at the rent of £400 a year. He stipulated that certain sanitary defects connected with the drainage, water supply, and otherwise, should be remedied, at the sight of Dr. Stevenson Macadam previous to entry. From the statements on record it appears that the necessary operations were not finished until about 7th June, when the defender took possession, and in the meantime he was put to considerable expense for the necessary accommodation for himself and family at North Berwick and elsewhere until the house was ready. In the course of a voluminous correspondence between the parties, the defender stipulated that he would claim for the expense to which he was put, and an abatement corresponding to the period during which he was kept out of possession. This claim the pursuers' agents repudiated. When the November term came the pursuers claimed their full half-year's rent. This the defender refused to pay unless his claim was recognised, and that being declined, he consigned the half-year's rent until his claim should be adjusted. The pursuers at once resorted to sequestration for the full half-year's rent, and in security of the rent due at the following Whit Sunday. This was met by

* These letters are given in order to show that Mr. Russell foresaw what was coming, and used great exertions in order to induce landlords and statesmen to be wise in time.

consignation of the whole year's rent, and Sheriff Shirreff recalled the sequestration. The case was fought out on its merits, the pursuers contending that the defender's illiquid claim could not be pled against their liquid claim for rent, and the defender maintaining that the pursuers, not having given complete possession, were not entitled to exact, and certainly not to sequester for the full rent; and, ultimately, Sheriff Shirreff found that in the circumstances the pursuers were not entitled to resort to sequestration for recovery of their rents. This decision was appealed to Sheriff Davidson, before whom the case was debated in Edinburgh last week, and the Sheriff has now dismissed the pursuers' appeal, and affirmed the decision of his substitute. There was a minor appeal by the defender against the Sheriff—substitute's finding that the 26th, and not the 15th, of May was the date of entry. On this point the Sheriff finds that 15th, not 26th, May was the term, but that the defender subsequently agreed to take entry as from the 26th. The following are the salient points in the learned Sheriff's note to his interlocutor:—

(1.) In reference to the term of entry: "The inference seems to be that the defender, with that consideration and liberality which characterises him throughout these proceedings, did then acquiesce in his entry being made at the 26th May. It is with great hesitation the Sheriff holds that that must be now taken as the date of entry. By this the pursuers obtain an advantage which they hardly deserve, more particularly when possession was not duly given on the 26th."

(2.) In reference to the pursuers' right to sequester:—"The pursuers agreed to make certain sanitary and other improvements, which were to be completed by the term of the defender's entry. It required some time to complete them. They were not commenced, or most of them at least, till after the 15th of May, and the house was not in a fit state for occupation till the 7th of June. It is very manifest that the defender is entitled to a reduction from his rent corresponding to the time he was kept out of occupation, and the consequent expenses to which he was put. He always maintained his right to such a reduction, and the pursuers always repudiated his claim. In November, 1878, they demanded the full rent of the half-year. Immediately the defender consigned the full rent subject to his claim for deduction in regard to which he proposed a reference. The pursuers again refused to recognise any claim on his part, declined to agree to a reference, and announced that it would be their duty to sequester. To some persons litigation is a luxury; and, however reasonable and sensible the defender's proposal was, the pursuers were, of course, entitled to refuse a reference. The rent not being immediately paid, they instantly presented this petition for sequestration. Even if the pursuers had been entitled to sequester, the use of so harsh a procedure would, in the circumstances, have been unjustifiable. The whole question between them and the defender might have been settled in an ordinary action for payment of the rent, but the full rent not being due it needs no discussion that the pursuers were not entitled to proceed by sequestration; and there was no discussion on that point, because at the debate the pursuers admitted that if they were not entitled to the full rent they were wrong in using sequestration."

For the pursuers: Mr. Andrew Jamieson, advocate, and Messrs. G. M. Wood, S.S.C., and A. Wood, writer, Haddington. For the defender: Mr. Alexander Blair, advocate, and Messrs. J. Walker, W. S. and Thomas Todrick, writer, Haddington.

From the *Haddingtonshire Courier*, October 24th, 1879.

*The Sheriff's remarks throw a strong light on the character of Dr. Kirkwood.

THE SOCIAL SCIENCE CONGRESS AND THE LAND LAWS.

Extracts from *North British Agriculturist* of 13th Oct., 1880.

The 24th Annual Congress of the Social Science Association, opened in Edinburgh, on Wednesday, under the Presidency of Lord Reay.

Extract from a Paper read by Mr. P. P. Sellar, Hartfield, Tain.

"The law of distress in England and Ireland is as indefensible, as a question of principle, as the law of Hypothec in Scotland; and there can be no substantial freedom of contract on the part of agricultural tenants in either of these countries, so long as the law of distress is maintained on its present footing. . . . In fact, Hypothec was a necessary adjunct to the system of entail; it enabled the proprietor to rack-rent with impunity, and at the expense of the tenants' creditors, and, as Hypothec has fallen, entail, which leaned on it, is bound to come to an end also. . . . The farmer who, especially towards the end of his lease, takes measures by which the condition is sucked out of the land; the most extravagant waste that can occur in farming really deserves the praise of being the best man of business under the present system. But the Leech's management will not last long. High farming will pay under proper conditions, and it is the only farming that will hold its own in the present day. . . . For example: a Scotch tenant entering upon a 19 years' lease of a farm of 500 acres in poor condition, with £7,000 of farming capital, at a rent of £700, may, by high farming, increase its intrinsic value £200 a-year before the expiry of the lease. He must have had very great outlays, and have reaped small crops at the first. To the loss at the beginning of the lease compound interest. He lives very economically; he often fails. However, if he survives that danger, he has good crops during the latter half of the lease; but it is too much to expect that he can be remembered as a farmer, and also confer a bonus of £5,000 upon the proprietor as an addition to his investment of from £18,000 to £20,000 in his estate. That is the value of £200 a year of increased rent at 30 years' purchase, the ordinary price of land, after deducting the proportion of burdens. . . . If British, and particularly Scotch, agriculture is to keep its position in the world, farmers will require to raise still greater produce from the land than they have hitherto done, and for this purpose even more capital will be required than is now employed. . . . Scotch farmers are not to be ultimately defeated in their war with fortune. Many have already fallen in the struggle, still the rank and file hold on, persevering with admirable courage, farming as highly as they can, taking advantage of every improvement, living with the utmost economy, and determined to fulfil their contracts like men, or fall like men. . . . When farmers shall possess the new hope, which they will enjoy as they come to see the land laws in process of reformation, there is no doubt that they will aspire to take an independent position similar to that which has been so long enjoyed by their brethren the merchants and manufacturers of England. Their prosperity has increased, perhaps, tenfold, since the adoption of free-trade measures. . . . It is mainly in consequence of the prosperity of the mercantile and manufacturing classes that British farming has so long held its own in spite of the adverse effect of antiquated laws and customs affecting land. The chief hope that farmers in their present gloom possess lies in a revival of trade. Let us all trust that British merchants and manufacturers may yet be benefitted by an increased home trade through the recovery of agricultural prosperity after a reform of the land laws, and let us not forget that agriculture is still the greatest of British interests."

Extracts from a Paper read by Mr. James Melvin, Bonnington.

"The Scotch tenant-farmer has been hampered with laws which were hurtful in the days of Protection, and have become incompatible with freedom of trade. . . . Paying for the privilege of farming.

"As an instance of the risk such engagements entail and the responsibilities they incur, I have obtained the actual results of the cost of cultivation, rents, and produce of 1,200 acres of land in Midlothian, the rents of which were fixed six or eight years ago, in a medium climate, partly grazed and fairly managed.

"The following is the cost of cultivation during 1877, 1878, 1879:—

Rent £9,300, less £100 allowed for improvements	... £9,200
Manual labour	... 5,800
Horse labour	... 3,570
Manure bills	... 5,225
Seeds, Tradesmen's Bills, all other farm accounts, interest on lime, and drains, also cost of Steam	
Thrashing	... 6,244

£30,123

Total amount of produce during these three years ... 23,395

Showing a loss of ... £6,728

In other words, if the rent of land is the surplus, after the expense of cultivation has been met, the tenants have paid their landlords £6,728 for the privilege of farming their land, and using their own capital, over and above the produce the land has left. It thus appears that two out of three years the landlords have been living on the tenants' capital. I am informed that many thousands of acres of land similarly situated in the Lothians have left like results, though around the towns, and in farms very favourably situated as to soil, climate, and rent the tenants have not fared so badly. There were several favourable years before 1871, which tempted a greater number of incompetent outsiders to offer high rents for farms, many of which were accepted, and this caused a rise of rents on estates and farms adjoining. My own opinion, fortified by that of several thoroughly practical men is, that through the operation of the law of Hypothec, the landlord's right to the tenant's improvements, and the desire of many people without skill or capital to get upon the land, certain law agents and factors have been enabled to raise the rents of one-fourth of the land in the Lothians upwards of 30 per cent. above its value, another fourth 20 per cent., and another 10, only one-fourth being fairly rented. Last year, 1879, the actual deficiency of the crops under an average year, to meet rent and expenses, not taking depreciation of stock into account, would amount to £700,000 in the Lothians alone, and £500,000 in 1877. This loss, save certain abatements of rent kindly given by some landlords, was borne by the tenants."

EAST LOTHIAN EXPERIENCES.

"Mr. Patrick Sheriff, well known for his success in selecting and introducing improved varieties of grain, wrote a book on 'North American Agriculture in 1835.' He was then tenant of Mungoswell's. He gives an account of farming in East Lothian, where he and his forefathers had farmed for generations. At page 334 he says:—'Such is the state of East Lothian farmers, that during the last 20 years, perhaps, three-fourths of them have not fulfilled their original contracts, and the money that has been lost in cultivating the soil is incalculable.'

"Mr. ———, of our acquaintance, on a farm of 100 acres, ran up £1,200 sterling of arrears of rent, and got off by paying £200 sterling. The obtaining a lease may often be little better than being ruined, and many tenants, after leading anxious lives and exposed to insults of rack-renters, may think themselves fortunate if they escape with a remnant of their fortunes.

"The feeling landlords' agents and factors evince towards the tenants is so hostile that a small portion of the farmers originally connected with East Lothian obtain leases of late years. The new tenants come from other counties. It is no consequence how respectable the old tenant may be in private life, or how high in his profession, a promise of rent, though not likely to be fulfilled, with subserving in a stranger, is sure to get him the farm.

"About 15 years ago 11 tenants resided on a certain estate, and since then the effects of 10 of them have been sequestrated and sold at the instance of the landlord, and on the division of an estate, the tenants have all been changed twice in 12 years, and one of the farms has had four tenants, three of whom became bankrupt.

"That was the state of matters previous to 1835. In 1871 Mr. George Hope, then of Fentonbarns, when showing the farming of East Lothian to Mr. Jenkins, the Secretary of the Royal Agricultural Society of England, explained to him the history of the various farms they passed by, and Mr. Jenkins, in the journal of the Society, in 1871, stated that over-renting encouraged by the law of Hypothec had prevented a great many tenants from sitting out their leases. This statement was taken exception to by Mr. Nesbit Hamilton, Mr. Hope's landlord, at a meeting in Haddington, in March, 1872, where Mr. Hope explained that his remarks were conveyed to Mr. Jenkins when they were discussing the propriety of leases, and they were as follows:—'He had seen seven tenants in a farm during the past 50 years; also four, five, and six in others; and, on the average, he had seen at least three tenants on every farm in the county, and that there were only about 20 farms in the county in the hands of the same families. He did not say the people were not able to sit out their leases. Within a week Mr. Hope got notice to quit his farm of Fentonbarns. This landlord and he are now gone.'"

CHANGES OF TENANCY AND FREQUENT BANKRUPTCY.

"Within the eight years that have elapsed the loss of capital, change of tenants, and bankruptcies which have occurred on Mr. Nesbit Hamilton's estate, have still further increased the list to which Mr. Hope referred. The history of the district of Mid and West Lothian I am acquainted with is somewhat similar to that of East Lothian. I can name farms where there have been six or seven fresh tenants during my recollection, numbers of the tenants who have occupied their farms taken for 19 years, only two, three, or four years, and not a few who went out beggared after longer occupancies. Many who, having saved something by industry and frugality during one lease, had their rents raised so high that they were thrown back to where they were during the next lease. There are, no doubt, several survivals, families of tenants who have withstood all the changes of times, and false, unfair competition. There have been reasonable landlords, and fair-dealing factors and tenants who have prospered. There is, however, a feeling prevailing that many of the tenants who have survived owe their existence as tenants to other support than the land; and the two or three lucky speculators in farming, who hold their six or eight leases, with, perhaps, only one family to keep, were fortunate in having a run of favourable years after their leases had been entered on. A very large portion of the fresh capital

which is invested in farming comes from savings made in trade, and not from the land, and a large portion of late of the rental, where there has not been private funds, has been advanced in many cases to tenants by their relations in the towns to enable them to meet their rent due to the landlords. The Royal Commission now sitting, by investigating the position of tenants under 19 years' leases, examining into the state of matters when they entered into their leases, and considering their present position, will do much to show how honourable men have been placed in false situations through one-sided, unfair laws. Their great liking to continue in the same farm and neighbourhood induces them to agree to terms against their own judgment."

THE SURVIVING EFFECTS OF HYPOTHEC.

"Mr. Hope, then of Fentonbarns, before this Congress, when last in Edinburgh, held that the false competition for land maintained by the law of Hypothec, and the landlord's claim on the tenant's improvements, aided by the game laws and those of entail and primogeniture, injured his success and diminished the produce of the country; and years ago Mr. McNeil Caird showed the unjust presumptions of law in favour of the landlord as against the tenant. Since then the steady, consistent, reasonable agitation carried on by the Scottish tenant-farmers, through the Chamber of Agriculture, has led to Hypothec being abolished after Martinmas, 1881, though existing leases do not come under the Act. . . . The law, the church, the medical, and educational professions are all so far protected as to require training and licence before the individual is allowed to practise them. Also many trades require long primary training before they can be exercised. Not so in farming on some estates; the offer of sufficient rent and acceptance of any conditions of let, however one-sided, secures a lease; and a large portion of the land in the Lothians, where such competition has been excessive, has been so raised from the multiplication of high offers by parties unacquainted with agriculture. The landlord, backed by Hypothec, could choose any one as tenant. If the prudent, cautious, skilful tenant declined to accept a lease on the landlord's terms, this law enabled the landlord to accept the incompetent, dishonest, or speculative unskilled offerer when he promised the terms wanted, the law enabling the landlord to secure himself in the event of the tenant's failure. The innocent parties who supplied the tenant with the requirements for the farm suffered. I have known a person offering £4 4s. per acre for land be accepted, and through course of years succeed in reducing the rent he paid to £2 10s. per acre. In my neighbourhood, four years ago, a party offering £3 8s. per acre for a farm was accepted, and in two years he was a bankrupt—the farm was not worth 50s. an acre. As an adjunct to my farm, I held for 20 years a grazing farm. The lease expired seven years ago. There was some arable land added. The tenant who succeeded me within three years desired a reduction of rent, was refused, but was offered to be relieved of his lease. He was glad to retire with the loss of a large sum of money. Another tenant was chosen, and on his death a third, the law keeping the landlord safe all the time. There are numerous cases of tenants who, rather than leave the land they have long occupied (were born on it, perhaps), have had to accept of farms the rents of which have been forced up by such unfair competition."

SCRIMP JUSTICE TO FARMERS UNDER EXISTING LEASES.

"The Legislature has served out scrimp justice to tenants under 19 years' leases. When the importation of foreign cattle was allowed in 1842, the tenants under lease suffered severely from the panic and consequent low prices

of live stock which continued for years. They also suffered from the same cause after the abolition of the corn-laws. There was no provision in their favour in the Acts, so also when the Poor-law and Education Acts were passed. The tenants were taxed on half of their farm rents, or on the costs of their business, and not on their house rents, while the landlord was taxed on his income only. When the law of Hypothec was considered by the Committee of the House of Lords, several of the advocates for the continuation of the law said fairly enough it enabled landlords to let their farms at a higher rent to tenants of inferior capital and credit without risk to themselves. The Lords, in their approving report, page 13, say: 'That the law of Hypothec does in this manner increase the number of competitors for farms, and must therefore tend to raise rents paid for them, does not appear to be disputed by the supporters of the law any more than by the opponents.' Now, then, since the law has been abolished as perpetrating injustice, some clause should have been inserted by which tenants of farms who felt themselves aggrieved by the law, in having through its operation been compelled, as admitted by the Lords' Committee, to pay more than value for their farms or leave the country or 'calling,' should be entitled to a re-valuation or be at liberty to give up their lease, being paid, as Lord Rames proposed, for their improvements. No such fair or reasonable clause has been inserted in the Act abolishing that law. Then, again, with the Ground Game Bill the House of Commons refused to make that Bill apply to existing leases even though the tenant offered to pay the value of the game so transferred to him. If tenant-farmers had been a majority in the House the case might have been altered. The many thousand cases of over-renting through unfair competition caused by Hypothec will bear its bitter fruit for more than a dozen of years. . . . The soil being a natural subject, the nation, in common justice to the lease-holding tenant who took his farm under other conditions which now exist, should modify existing conditions to the extent of such relief of rental or otherwise as a re-valuation under existing conditions would involve. In the re-valuation, (1) the tenant's competition with the food supplies of the world would be considered; (2) the fetters of Hypothec and game destinations removed from future tenants which still attach to the leaseholder. Landlords in their own interests should do this; but since most of them have not done so, Parliament should interfere to compel all this simple act of justice, which some of the best landlords have acknowledged and acted upon. The relation of landlord and the lease-holding tenant put on the above footing, and freedom of cultivation and growth given the latter, he has a chance of facing successfully the competition of the world, and would, I have no doubt, endeavour to do so."

Extracts from Remarks on Foregoing Papers from North British Agriculturist, 20th October, 1880.

Dr. Farquharson, M.P., for West Aberdeenshire :—

"There were many other points in Mr. Sellar's paper to which he would have liked to refer had time permitted. His remarks about the game-laws, recent legislation, snaring, and existing leases, were deserving of note. As Mr. Sellar knew, Mr. Barclay himself and others attempted to induce the Legislature to bring existing leases under the new law, but in vain. No doubt the obstacles were great; but from points dropped in course of the discussion, he thought the Legislature (if he might venture to base anything on private talk) would be inclined to consider such a Bill if brought in by some private member next Session."

Mr. Williamson, M.P. for St. Andrew's Burghs :—

"He believed farmers should demand lower rents; these were altogether too high. Land had acquired a fictitious value far beyond its real worth. Looking at the vast extent of uncultivated land in the world, the cheap means of transit now existing, as well as the number of screw steamers being built at every shipbuilding port for bringing to this country corn and cattle at cheap rates, considering all these things he thought landlords would have to make up their minds for a material reduction of their rent rolls."

Mr. McLagan, M.P.:—

"He was not aware that any private member had thought proper to propose bringing in a Bill, as alluded to by Dr. Farquharson, by which existing leases would come under the operation of the Game Act. He was sorry the Government did not see their way to make the Act apply to existing leases, particularly with the fair terms attached to the proposal of allowing compensation to the landlord for liberty to shoot ground game. If a Bill of that kind were introduced next Session, as he had voted for it in the House of Commons, he would be glad to vote for it again. . . . One thing referred to by Mr. Williamson he could not overlook. He had said that tenants should demand lower rents. He (Mr. McLagan) did not agree with Mr. Williamson there. These matters would adjust themselves where necessary, while the proposed demand was rather a bold way of putting it. It looked just a little Irish-like—(a laugh)—and his friend, the chairman, had remarked, 'How is it you don't find some landlords shot where so many tenants are failing?' With the present competition in farming he hoped landlords would enter fully into this question of rent adjustment, and have it settled in accordance with the great foreign competition to which the farmer is exposed." (Hear, hear.)

Mr. T. R. Buchanan (known to our readers as the plucky opponent of Lord Elcho at the late General Election) :—

"Within the last few weeks he had heard of a temporary arrangement being come to. The 19 years' lease of a farm had expired. The former rent was £1,300 a year, and the farmer was willing to renew, but at a considerable reduction. The landlord advertised the farm, but there was only one offer, and that was not accepted. Eventually an agreement was come to with the old tenant, at a reduction of from £1,300 to £800, while the lease was not for 19 years, but only for five years. At this remarkable stage in the history of agriculture, he was of opinion that this question concerning the duration of leases was a most important one." (Hear, hear.)

Mr. Melvin, in reply to observations on his paper :—

"Besides evading the point as to this heavy risk on the part of a struggling tenant, he thought Mr. McLagan might, as a landlord, have treated in a more kindly way the fact that the tenantry of Scotland had been suffering heavy losses. It was a matter which ought not to have been treated jauntily, as if it were a thing of every-day occurrence. He had deemed it his duty to come before the Congress and give the best information he could obtain regarding leases and losses. It was, no doubt, a disagreeable subject, and they could not be expected to like it. Nevertheless he was sure that the facts and opinions he had offered would have found substantial support at a meeting of tenant-farmers."

The Chairman (Lord Reay) in closing the discussion :—

"On Mr. Melvin's paper being read, he confessed that when they had that dark picture presented of farming in the Lothians, he had asked Mr. McLagan whether there was such a thing as shooting the landlords in Scotland?"

TENANT FARMERS AND THE GOVERNMENT.

Extract from *North British Agriculturist*, 20th October, 1880.

"A Conference of the Farmers' Alliance was held on Monday, in the Westminster Palace Hotel. A paper, circulated in the room, stated that the serious position in which landlords and tenants found themselves placed at the present time, urgently demanded that every legitimate effort be made to encourage the development of the resources of the soil; and the preliminary step in that direction must be to free the business of farming from the trammels of unjust laws, and the cultivation of the soil from the unwise, and, in many cases, absurd restriction which obstructed its improvement."

VACANT FARMS IN ENGLAND.

North British Agriculturist, 20th October, 1880.

"At the present moment, this industry (Agriculture) is in great straits, and threatened with an alarming decline. It is undoubtedly true that wide breadths of English land are in imminent danger of going altogether out of cultivation, instead of presenting every likelihood of being tilled to the highest degree of productiveness. Probably in every one of our counties there are at the present time a far greater number than was ever before known, at least during the present generation, of farms without tenants, or which will fall vacant next Lady Day, or on determination of notices given by the occupiers. The land agents' lists never were so full of eligible farms to let. In almost every neighbourhood you can hear of whole series of holdings left in owners' hands, or to be on offer at the approximate quitting of tenants who, like their fathers before them, have lived upon the same estate for many years without a break in the family succession of occupants. In some districts you may journey for many miles at a stretch, through farm after farm. All you are told, 'In his lordship's hands,' or about losing the tenants; and these are by no means impracticable and impoverishing clay farms, or subject to any special obstacle against a good man's earning of a livelihood. Applications for farms do not press into the estates offices as of yore, with obsequious plaints for the gracious favour of the landlord or even of his steward. Agricultural pupils no longer throng the establishments of leading farmers, accustomed to afford young men facilities for gaining practical knowledge in their fields, folds, and feeding-houses. Taking up any provincial newspaper in which 'farms to let' appear, we perceive not only an alarming increase in the number advertised as compared with a few years back, but also indications that the farms offered are, for the most part, of a sound character, and not of that doubtful or unsafe reputation which almost exclusively appeared at one time in advertisement sheets. An agricultural journal (not a land agents' organ) printed last week advertisements of sixteen farms, embracing 5,780 acres. A North Midland county paper offered twenty-six farms, of the combined extent of 8,700 acres; and the same week's issue of a Midlands' county paper gave particulars of ninety-eight farms, covering an area of 27,720 acres. Here, in a single issue of only three newspapers, are one hundred and forty farms, having an aggregate area of 42,000

acres, and averaging 300 each, advertised as wanting tenants. The inducements held out, and the advantages enumerated, reveal the influence of that strong popular movement, both legislative and social, now favouring measures of greater freedom and security for the cultivators of the soil. Mainly, these vacant farms are such as have been worth occupying, and are in working condition, but thrown upon the market for want of competition in a business which thousands of men are now only continuing at a loss. Who can sufficiently lament the abandonment of agriculture by large numbers of the men who form one of the most valuable classes in the community, and who will not be ready to unite his sorrow with indignation when he recognises that we have not alone to blame an abnormal concurrence of successive bad seasons with an under-selling in the markets by foreign competition, for thus driving out of the farms which their forefathers held, not only poor and incapable husbandmen, but the old-established tenantry, whose management has been above reproach for long terms of years. For the present exhaustion of the means of able business men is only in part due to the series of adverse circumstances which have latterly surrounded the practice of British agriculture. No one has shown, no one professes to believe, that our fine lands or even soils of inferior quality, can no longer be cultivated with a living profit, but only that farmers cannot cope with ill seasons and discouraging prices under the old rate of outgoings. In reality, and notwithstanding the considerate and sometimes handsome manner in which many proprietors have shared loss with their tenantry, there are great portions of England wherein no abatements of rent have been allowed during the last few years of farmers' misfortunes, partly, no doubt, in consequence of the inability of the owners to relinquish any portion of the revenues devoured, perforce, by their own estate and family embarrassments.

"But thousands of occupiers, including hosts of men who worked as leading farmers in their several localities, are ruined and expatriated because their landlords could not otherwise be brought to admit that the business will no longer pay under the old rents and conditions of holding.

"More generally than is known to the world at large, properties inland are so encumbered that reduction of rent means ruin to the owner, and in such an emergency there is no help for it but to sacrifice even the oldest and most valuable tenants rather than lose the chance of finding new corners adventurous enough to keep up the income yielded by the estate."

MR. BRIGHT AND THE FARMERS.

"Mr. Bright, in acknowledging the receipt of a letter sent to him by a tenant-farmer of Carnarvonshire on agricultural depression, and the relation between landlord, agent and tenant, says:—'The conditions of agriculture in this country are unfavourable for the farmer and for the public. Misfortunes may change them, as they may force the farmers to say something, and to exert themselves. I have preached to farmers for nearly forty years with but little result. American competition may speak to them and to our landlord class with more effect.'"

The above is an extract from *Mark Lane Express* of 24th January, 1881, same as in *North British Agriculturist* of 19th January, 1881, and was also in many other papers.

(Copy)

J. M. Russell to John Bright, Greendykes,
Tranent, 22nd January, 1881.

Right Hon. John Bright, M.P.

Sir,—I have read, in the *North British Agriculturist* newspaper of this week, an extract from a letter written by you to a tenant-farmer of Carnarvonshire, in which you say that you "have preached to farmers for nearly forty years with but little result," and that "misfortunes may force the farmers to say something and to exert themselves." I have been a farmer for more than twenty-five years, having had considerable experience, and would like to know from you how I am to exert myself more than I have been doing, and what you have been preaching to farmers as a class for so long, and with so little result. I hope you will not think it impertinent in me to ask this from you, seeing that your letter, or an extract from it, has been printed in the newspapers most extensively read in Scotland. I may mention I have always been favourable to free trade, a Nonconformist, and a Liberal in politics. I have always admired your public career very much in many respects, and am sorry to see one in your honourable position publicly finding fault, unjustly as I believe, with a class which deserves, in my opinion, more respect and kinder treatment than it has received during the last forty years from British statesmen. Successive seasons, calamitous beyond precedent, have come upon the British farmers while competing with the whole world, and at the same time oppressed by cruel and unjust feudal laws, which, to give the cultivators of the soil fair-play, should undoubtedly have been abolished before the corn-laws. In addition to this, we have to bear a most unequal share of poor and education rates, and I do think that when, in such circumstances, you call upon us to exert ourselves more, you are acting very much like a king we read of in Scripture, who said to those whom he was oppressing, "Ye are idle, ye are idle." I hope you will be kind enough to let me know in what respects you think we are so idle that we deserve the rebuke you have administered to us.

I am, yours respectfully,

(Signed) JAMES M. RUSSELL.

(Copy)

From John Bright to J. M. Russell.

London, 26th January, 1881.

Dear Sir,—I am surprised at your letter of complaint. I did not refer to industry or exertion on the land, but to public questions in which the interests of farmers were involved. I urged farmers to insist on the abolition of laws for the preservation of game, and spent much money and labour on this question, but with no apparent result. The farmers complained, but did not combine; their votes were still given to men representing the landlord interest, and reform was rendered impossible. The same carelessness on political questions made it difficult if not impossible to secure any change in laws which affect the tenure of land, in the security of the capital laid out by the tenantry of this country. In short, the farmers were politically the body-guard of the proprietors, and thus change and reform could not be effected. We all learn from misfortune, and farmers, and indeed landowners also, are learning rapidly, but much suffering cannot be avoided. I have always had a great sympathy with farmers as a class, but I have lamented the helplessness of their political condition, and I have endeavoured to arouse them from it; wishing to be their friend, they have often deemed me their enemy. If political changes

can benefit the farmers, they can come only through the action of the Liberal party. The Tory party cannot deal with these questions, and their influence is still such that even the Liberal party may find it difficult to enforce the changes which are necessary and just. If the farmers make themselves politically well-informed, I think their future may be better than much of the past.

I am, respectfully yours,

(Signed)

JOHN BRIGHT.

Mr. James M. Russell, Greendykes, Tranent, N.B.

(Copy)

Greendykes, Tranent, N.B., 31st January, 1881.

Right Hon. John Bright, M.P.

Dear Sir,—I received your letter of 26th inst. You express surprise at my complaint, but I assure you I felt quite indignant when I read the extract from your letter which, since I wrote to you, I have seen in the leading English agricultural paper. The widest possible publicity seems to have been given to it. I still think the accusation you bring against farmers as a class too sweeping and very unjust to many. I know many farmers who have boldly and consistently voted against their landlord's candidates at elections, when they knew that their doing so was likely to compel them to make sacrifices which no other class that I know is compelled to make for voting according to their conscience. I believe you knew the late Mr. George Hope, who had to leave his farm, and whose improvements were confiscated, as Mr. James Howard expresses it, solely, as I understood, for doing what you say you have urged farmers to do. Now, I know cases even more cruel than Mr. Hope's, and I think, when you blame farmers for carelessness in the past, you quite forget that the legislature of Britain had insisted on allowing the landowners to retain the law of Hypothec, which prevented the farmers getting fair-play in the fight. Mr. George Hope once said to me, the law of Hypothec is just like a whip in the landlord's hand, and as long as he has it we must submit to a certain extent, or words to that effect.

Thirty years' experience has convinced me that this was a correct view, and it seems to me, that when you blame farmers for not exerting themselves to get the game laws repealed while the law of Hypothec was allowed to remain, you are acting very much as a Senator of the United States, who would blame the slaves of the Southern States for not exerting themselves to get their grievances redressed, while the Government kept on the slave laws, as it did till the war compelled it to repeal them. The Virginian slave, who exerted himself for repeal of laws which might be unjust to his class, would be sure of a severe flogging, perhaps to the danger of his very life; so the farmer who exerted himself for the repeal of the game laws was sure of being flogged with the Hypothec whip, very often driven out of his home, sometimes out of the business of farming, and sometimes out of the country. I write after painful and expensive experience, for I have suffered great loss of time, money, and health, from a swarm of game being let out on my crops, for years, in the end of a lease of a farm which I had spent the best years of my life in improving at great expense. I voted conscientiously for Mr. George Hope and Lord William Hay, in opposition to the wishes of the owner of the land I farmed, though my lease was within about a year of expiring when Lord William contested this county. I was told I might get a new lease of the farm, but on very ridiculous conditions, such conditions indeed, as left no doubt in my mind, that it was just a cunning way of

telling me I must leave the farm. I had therefore to leave, "a homeless wanderer," as a friend said to me when my valuable stocking of fine horses and implements, collected with great care and expense during the 19 years of my lease, were roused off at a great sacrifice, when the farm servants, also selected and trained for my work, were dispersed, and my expensive improvements, made during the same period, were "confiscated." No practical farmer of reputation would have taken the farm I left, under such circumstances; but protected by Hypothec, the landowner accepted as tenant a young lad, who had no sufficient training for such a farm, who just undid, as far as he could, all I had done in the way of improving, and about a year ago got rid of the farm in such condition that it could not be let, and the proprietor is now trying to bring it into condition for letting by farming it himself. I assure you, I found my "Radicalism," which was well known in the district, nearly prevented me getting another farm; and that I only got a farm again by offering a rent far above its fair value, so that in a sense, I may say I was driven out of the business. The proprietor of the farm where I was so cruelly treated by game and confiscation, is the "Right Hon." Robert Bourke, M.P. for King's Lynn. Again, a brother of mine, who occupied a farm in Midlothian, at a rent of £1,800 a year, the lease of which expired in November, 1879, belonging to Sir James Gardiner Baird, a man who publicly spoke of Mr. Gladstone favouring communism, had voted for the Liberal candidate in Midlothian whenever there was a contest. At a time when many landowners were reducing rents, and agricultural distress was wide-spread, that was about May, 1879, the proprietor refused to give a new lease of the farm which my brother and his father held for 38 years, except at a rise of 4s. per acre. My brother was anxious to remain where he had been so long, and offered to give the same rent as he had been paying, and which he had always considered above the fair value, for another lease, on condition that the proprietor would make the buildings suitable for the farm; but as the proprietor declined to give suitable buildings, the farm was advertised to let. No one put a foot on it during the weeks it was advertised, and then it was let to a man who had valued it for the proprietor, and advised the increase of rent. This man was a keen Tory, and political assistant of Sir J. G. Baird, and in the lease with him now, as joint-tenants, are two nephews, so that Sir J. G. Baird has got the Liberal out of the county, and has got in place of him three voters on his farm, who will almost to a certainty vote for the Tory candidate. Well, my brother took his passage for New Zealand, but the eviction, confiscation, and cruel and heartless treatment completely took the heart out of him, and so affected his mind, that his medical adviser would not allow him to go, so he forfeited half of his passage money, and is still in this country. I am exceedingly sorry to say he is now so much worse that he cannot be left alone, and his medical adviser has the gravest doubts about his mental health. An intelligent Midlothian farmer assured me, that, if the proprietor had not been protected by Hypothec, he would never have taken the tenants to whom he has now let the farm. Could my brother have done more, and would he not have done better to have voted for the Tories, and retained his home, his farm, and his soundness of mind. The new tenants have this advantage over him. If the farm is found too high-rented it will be reduced to them, while my brother, being a Liberal, would have been made to pay his rent. Another way in which the Liberal tenant is punished is as follows: The law of Hypothec keeps land at a fictitious rental. When the tenant finds, after he has taken the farm, that it is too high rented he will get a reduction, if a Tory, but not if he is a Radical. I have two near neighbours

who are conspicuous in their support of Elcho. One of these men has his farm now at a rent of about £400 a year less than he offered for it when publicly advertised. The other has also got a large reduction, paying now, I believe about £500 a year less than his first agreement. I, on the other hand, am made to fulfil my bargain. If I got a reduction at the same rate per acre as my neighbour just over the fence, who votes for Elcho, I would pay at least £700 a year less than I am now doing, so I am paying that sum annually for exerting myself to get Hypothec and game laws abolished. I have hitherto preserved my independence, but as you will see, at a great cost, and I think I may be excused for complaining when you tell me to exert myself more. Take the cases of my brother and myself. What more could we have done? I think we combined as far as we practically could do so. We both were members of the Scottish Chamber of Agriculture, and did all we could in our humble way for the Liberal candidate when we had opportunity. For myself, I always contributed to the funds of the dissenting Churches of which I was a member, believing as I do, more and more, that the so-called Established "Church" is the greatest supporter of the cruel and unjust laws from which we have suffered so much, being also a subscriber for many years to the Liberation Society, and I also joined the Farmers' Alliance wherever it was started, contributing to its funds liberally, I believe, for one in my position. Scotch farmers *have combined*, for our Scotch Chamber of Agriculture has existed for about 17 years, I think, and kept sending petition after petition to Parliament, till I for my part said I would sign no more petitions to a *British* Government. I see no way of exerting ourselves further unless we join the Irish Land League. Surely you do not mean we ought to go so far as that, when you say we have not combined. If you mean that a larger proportion of farmers should join chambers of agriculture, alliances, &c., I think you overlook the fact, that, in consequence of being protected by Hypothec the landowners are enabled to select their tenants, or body-guard as you call them, and with these men, who may be about the half of the tenantry in such a county as this, men who hold the opinions as to agricultural politics of the late Mr. George Hope, can never combine. If Mr. Hope's supporters had their way, such men would not have farms at all. They are in a sense the creatures of Hypothec. I believe the present state of matters has been brought about by the fact that the inhabitants of towns thought they were independent of our own agriculture, and could see it destroyed without suffering along with it, believing that the foreigners would always continue to take their manufactures, and supply them with food. I do not profess to know if Britain, or any other nation, can prosper which destroys its own agriculture, but I have seen it stated that the Roman Empire declined very fast when its citizens became luxurious and neglected their agriculture. It appears to me that the agriculture of Britain has been to a great extent destroyed by the apathy, indifference, and selfishness of the burgh constituencies, who, thinking their own interests would not be affected by the destruction of agriculture, were deaf to the urgent complaints of agriculturists. In 1865 the intelligent part of the farmers had become fully alive to the great injustice being done to agriculture, and the probability of such a crisis as we are now apparently coming to, which has been hastened, of course, by the very unfavourable seasons we have recently had. In that year we brought forward Mr. Hope in opposition to Lord Elcho for East Lothian, and the farmers of Norfolk sent Mr. C. S. Read to Parliament. As the feeling among the farmers increased, in 1868 such counties as Midlothian, Berwick and Perth, threw off the Tory representatives and returned Liberals. Now, how did the Liberal

party, to whom you tell us to look for help, reward the farmers for their support, while fighting for them in such an unfair field and incurring the punishment which was inflicted in such cases as Mr. Hope's, my brother's, and my own. They actually relieved the landowners of the obligation under which they had all along held their land of providing education in the parishes, and laid the burden on the already oppressed farmers, and did so in a glaringly unjust and irritating form, at the same time refusing to listen to the petition of the farmers for the abolition of the monstrously cruel law of Hypothec. Can any sensible man be surprised that the farmers in disgust turned out the Liberal members who had so betrayed them, and that Midlothian, Perth, and Berwick again returned Tories? I mention these counties because they are close to where I reside, but I do not doubt many other counties did the same. I assure you, that, though I am a thorough Liberal, when Lord Beaconsfield publicly said that the Government which followed the election of 1868 had pursued a career of plundering and blundering, I felt, from my own experience as a farmer, he spoke the real truth. In fact, I cannot recollect a single benefit conferred on agriculture by the Liberal party, during the 30 years I have been a farmer. The recent Game Bill may be the beginning of a new career, but then it comes *too late* to benefit the men who fought so well. I know a case in this county, of a farm which was in the proprietor's hands for about 30 years, I think, because it was notorious for its game damage, and the landlord would only let it on hard conditions. Since the passing of the recent Game Bill, it has been let, and it is said on very favourable terms, because at present there are so many farms in the market. The tenants who have taken it, however, are of a family which has all along voted for Elcho. A case like this is surely not calculated to make men who have suffered so much for Liberalism feel kindly to the so-called Liberal party. I could give you an instance of most shabby treatment of a tenant in the same district, very recently by a Liberal ex-M.P., but I refrain, as my letter is already too long. I only say his conduct contrasted most unfavourably with that of the Tory proprietors in their treatment of their supporters, so much so, that his law agents, who generally transact such business for him, and who it may be mentioned are keen Tories, refused to act in the shabby way he wished, so that he had to do the dishonourable work himself. You say we all learn from misfortunes, and I fear misfortunes only will teach the commercial and manufacturing classes, that they cannot do great injustice to a class with impunity, and that to insist for 30 years after the abolition of the corn-laws on protection being given to a landowner when committing an act of such horrid cruelty as I have described in my brother's case, will certainly bring a day of retribution upon them. We Scotch farmers, as a class, have really, as far as I know, more cause to complain than the Irish, who are now, on account of their violence, receiving so much attention from the British Government. For my own part, when I consider the monstrous cruelty and oppression I have myself suffered, and have now seen my brother so horribly treated, I feel very much inclined to try if I could not, by making a sacrifice, emigrate to the United States of America, where I could renounce my allegiance to Queen Victoria, and be done with a Government which, whether under the name of Liberal or Conservative, has persisted so long in degrading and oppressing an honest and honourable industry like that of agriculture. I would never think of joining such a society as the Irish Land League, but would rather quietly emigrate, as I think the Irish ought to do, because I firmly believe in the Book in which it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." If I am right in sup-

posing that the cruel neglect, and unjust and irritating impost of rates for education by the Government which went into power in 1868, was the cause of the overthrow of that Government and the accession to power of the party of Lord Beaconsfield, which has plunged the country into expensive wars in Afghanistan and Africa, and goaded Ireland almost into a state of rebellion, the commercial and manufacturing classes, as well as the priests and lawyers, may find out their error when too late, and also learn that, after all, honesty is the best policy, if it should be by experience somewhat dearly bought. I am sorry this letter is so long, but I think it of importance at the present time, that the state of matters as to agriculture in Scotland, and the facts I have stated as to the treatment of Liberal tenant-farmers, should be known to you. I have to thank you for your reply to my former letter.

I am, yours respectfully,

(Signed) JAMES M. RUSSELL.

(Copy)

Greendykes, Makmerry, Edinburgh, 17th Nov., 1882.

To the Right Hon. the Earl of Rosebery.

My Lord,—I take the liberty of asking your lordship to grant me an interview. I am engaged in agriculture in East Lothian, and have been so for nearly 30 years. I find the great majority of those engaged in agriculture in this county have had to come to an arrangement with their landlords or other creditors—and in some cases with both these parties—and get them to accept a composition of from 5s. to 16s. a pound; in some cases every year, and in other cases with intervals of some years intervening. I have paid since I came to this county above £40,000 in rent, and have at present no arrears, and never asked nor received any abatement. I now find, however, that it is doubtful if I can continue in agriculture much longer without risking the money of those with whom I have transactions. Under these circumstances I wish to lay the state of matters before your lordship, as it appears to me to be perfectly clear that the real agriculturist is driven out of the business entirely by the most cruel and unjust laws of Britain; and I have some hope that your lordship will be able to advise us as to what we ought to do at this crisis. I am prepared to show you that it has been the practice in this county for the last 20 years to let farms publicly at 50 per cent. above the fair value, this over-rent being in many cases not exacted from those who support the Tory party; while those who support the Liberals have to pay the full rent or break down in the course of their leases. When this happens, of course the object of the unjust law has been attained, and the tenant is at the mercy of the proprietor of his farm or his factor, and cannot be expected to vote in direct opposition to the wish of those who can turn him and his family—if he has one—out of their home without a penny. I am considering the propriety of relinquishing farming in Britain and going to the United States of America; and as I believe that those who like myself engaged in British agriculture as a business about the time the corn-laws were repealed have suffered most extraordinarily unjust treatment, I think the British Government should now, as a small compensation for neglect in the past, give us facilities for getting quit of our farms with as little sacrifice of capital as possible, so that we may have something to start with in another country. I have taken this course of writing to your lordship, after much hesitation and anxious consideration, as I have come to the conclusion that it would be most foolish in me to retire from the business to which I was trained, and in which I have persevered so long without bringing the state of matters in this county to your notice, as I am prepared to show

you that I have to retire solely for want of ordinary fair-play, and that no business could be successfully conducted under such conditions as fall to the lot of the honest or independent farmer of land in this county. It seems to me a most extraordinary state of matters that thousands of acres of land in Britain should be going out of cultivation, when men like myself, trained to farm the very worst and poorest description of clay soil, and who have done so successfully in very bad times and under very great disadvantages, are being driven out of the business and out of Britain just when our experience has become valuable. If you should be kind enough to grant me an interview, I wish to bring along with me two friends, one a neighbour farmer who was for many years in Perthshire, and the other a Leith merchant who (doing business with the farmers of the county) is well acquainted with the state of matters, having paid much attention to the subject. I may add, both of these friends have like myself been steady supporters of the Liberal party. I believe that my request may be a somewhat unusual one, but then I believe that the state of matters in agriculture, and more particularly in this county, is unusually serious; and I recollect that when I, as a Scotch farmer, only ask a peaceful interview, the Irish farmer has in many cases had recourse to violence. The unjust land laws seem to have raised the rents of land in Scotland much in the same proportion as they have done in Ireland; for I have observed that the reductions ordered by the land court in Ireland are, in proportion to the present rents, just about the same as are required in this country. I do hope your lordship will kindly give your early attention to this matter. I may add that my father had to leave a farm in Midlothian, which he had occupied for 30 years, because he refused to vote for the Tory candidate, and my brother had to leave a farm also in Midlothian which he and his father before him had occupied for 38 years, entirely I believe owing to his persistence in voting for the Liberal candidate, as it is said the proprietor of the farm from which he was evicted has now got three Tory votes in place of the one Liberal. My brother suffered severely, for the eviction from his old home fairly broke his heart and rendered him unfit for business when about 50 years of age, and his friends have had to place him under the constant supervision of a doctor in England under the most melancholy circumstances. Notwithstanding all he had suffered for his adherence to Liberalism, and the little sympathy and no help he had got from that party, he returned to the county from a distance after his eviction to vote for Mr. Gladstone. I saw from the newspapers some time ago that a deputation from the Chamber of Agriculture, while alluding to the disgraceful state of matters in this country, declined to give names or particular instances; and it seems to me that, in a private interview, your lordship may obtain information which cannot well be given by a deputation from a public body.

I am, your Lordship's obedient servant.

JAMES M. RUSSELL.

(Copy)

Greendykes, Makmerry, East Lothian, 29th August, 1883.

To the Marquis of Tweeddale.

My Lord,—I write with the view of calling your attention to the very great injustice which has been done to many tenant-farmers who have endeavoured by their votes at parliamentary elections and otherwise, to procure justice and ordinary fair-play for the honest and honourable industry of agriculture which has been carried on in Scotland for many years past under very disadvantageous circumstances, and has now been almost ruined, entirely, as I believe, by most unjust and cruel laws. I write

to your lordship now because you are President of the East Lothian Liberal Association, and President of the East Lothian Agricultural Society, and I am exceedingly sorry to add that I have too good reason for reminding you that you once contested the neighbouring county of Midlothian at a parliamentary election.

My brother, who succeeded his father as tenant of the farm of Laughton Hall in that county, voted for Sir A. G. Maitland and also for your lordship. In consequence, I believe, of his voting for the Liberal candidate in opposition to the wishes of the proprietor of his farm, Sir James Gardiner Baird, he was "got rid of" when the lease of the farm expired, and three Tory voters were got in his place as tenants. The result has been that this cruel treatment has broken his heart, and within the last fortnight he has been placed in a lunatic asylum. I am not going further into details at present, but I ask your lordship to make inquiry into this case, as it was after he voted for you that he was "got rid of" from Midlothian. He returned from a distance to vote for Mr. Gladstone, notwithstanding all he had suffered for his support of Liberalism.

In consequence of the unjust treatment which these tenants who have supported the Liberal party in this county receive, as contrasted with those who have supported the Tory party, I find I am likely to be under the necessity of retiring from farming also, and this is rendered more probable by what has happened to my brother. I am not sure if I can go on for another year; at any rate if I do, it can only be by the forbearance of the proprietor of the land I farm. Having been thus crushed, as well as my poor brother, I am determined to do all I can to bring the extraordinary injustice we have suffered before the public, for my own justification and the sake of my reputation as an agriculturist.

I thought of writing a letter to your lordship to be laid before the East Lothian Liberal Association and also one to be laid before the Agricultural Society, as the state of matters in this county has for some time been scandalous.

If such a man as Sir James Caird could be got to report on the subject, I am sure it would be seen that it is impossible for any industry to exist, far less thrive, under the treatment which the real agriculturists have received. I noticed that at a meeting of the Haddington Agricultural Club, when the state of the Crofters was being discussed, one speaker, Durie, who has been well described as "a monster of toddy and fuel," found fault with Professor Blackie for the interest he took in these men, and said they should be "quietly got rid of." I have heard that the same man said in regard to the tenant-farmers in Lothian who have suffered so severely—using his usual brutal language—"Damn it, let them turn Tories then." No doubt he and his friends would like to "get quietly rid" of men like my brother and myself, as well as the Crofters, but by the help of God while I can hold a pen they shall not do so.

I cannot conceive of a respectable, honest and industrious class of men, such as the Scotch tenantry were, being more horribly treated than these men have been in East Lothian. We have men like Lord Salisbury telling us that we must use our own brains more in agriculture, but it will be seen that in Scotland, and above all counties, as far as I know, in East Lothian, the more a farmer has used his brains the worse he has been treated, and that the only way to success in agriculture has been to be dishonest, to be a good beggar or a dodger, so as to get down his rent, or get out of a farm altogether when he saw an opportunity of getting into another at a low rent. To farm *well* in Lothian has been in many cases certain ruin. By farming

badly and keeping the land in low condition, you may get a living, if it is worth living to be a beggar for reductions of rent or a dodger who can cunningly contrive to get into a cheap farm by dodging out of his engagement in a higher rented one.

I do hope your lordship will lose no time in giving this subject your most earnest attention. It will be for the good of landowners, tenant-farmers and the public at large. I recollect the noble stand you made on behalf of agriculture when you contested this county in 1868. Your lordship's father saw the need of tile draining when it was required, and afterwards steam cultivation, when it was absolutely necessary that steam must be introduced, if much of the land in Britain was to be kept in cultivation at all. When men like Hope and Sadler had tried steam many years after your father had done so, they found that it was out of the question to introduce it unless the game and Hypothec laws were repealed, and your lordship nobly took the side which was then unpopular. It will be seen by-and-by, that if the laws to which I have alluded had been repealed in 1865, when Mr. Hope was brought forward as candidate for this county, or even in 1858 when your lordship was candidate, much suffering would have been prevented to landowners as well as tenant-farmers. I believe very few are aware of the immense damage, if not actual ruin, which must come on many landowners and farmers from the long-continued discouragement and destruction of agriculture by these monstrously unjust and cruel laws.

I am yours respectfully, (Signed) JAMES M. RUSSELL.

(Copy)

Letter to the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone.

Greendykes, Makmerry, East Lothian, 17th November, 1883.

To the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone.

Sir,—I write to you for the purpose of calling your attention to the case of my brother John Russell, who was up till November, 1879, tenant of Saughton Hall Farm, in the county of Midlothian, and had to leave it at that time under circumstances which have had a very fearful result to him. He and his father before him had occupied that farm for two leases, or thirty-eight years, and I believe his offer for a new lease of the farm was not accepted just because he had voted for Sir A. G. Maitland and the present Marquis of Tweeddale when they contested Midlothian with Lord Dalkeith. The proprietor of the farm is Sir James Gardiner Baird, and I believe there are now three votes in favour of Toryism got from the farm, while the Liberal has been destroyed, and to all appearance rendered incapable of ever again opposing Toryism—in Midlothian or anywhere else. The farmer who professed to value the farm for a new lease to my brother did not hesitate to take it himself as joint tenant with two nephews when no one had looked at it after being publicly advertised. This farmer who acted in such an underhand way has long been known as a supporter of Toryism, and is now also tenant of the farm of Dentonbarns in this county, from which Mr. George Hope was evicted after he had been brought forward in opposition to the present Earl of Wemyss in 1865.

My brother returned to Midlothian from a distance to vote for you in 1880, notwithstanding all he had suffered for the support he had previously given to the Liberal party, and the fact, of which he was quite aware, that during all the time he was a tenant-farmer, that party had never passed a single measure which conferred the slightest benefit on him as an agriculturist. During the 19 years' lease of Saughton Hall, which expired in 1879, he paid an annual rent of £1,800 and never received any abatement,

In consequence of being so cruelly and heartlessly turned out of his home, and having all his effects roused off, my brother's mental health began to give way shortly after he received notice to quit, and I am grieved to say that recently it was considered necessary to apply to the court to appoint a Curator Bonis over his affairs, and he is now an inmate of the Crichton Asylum, near Dumfries. His medical adviser now says he fears there is little or no hope of his recovery.

I have thought it my duty to call your attention to this case, and would most respectfully ask you to order an inquiry to be made into the circumstances connected with it. I believe that if a thorough and impartial inquiry is made, it will be found that my brother has fallen a victim or martyr to the most cruel and unjust law of Hypothec, the retention of which, after the corn-laws were abolished, was a most cruel wrong done to all who had chosen agriculture as a profession, and were dependent on that industry for their livelihood, and has caused an immense amount of suffering and ruin to farmers and their families.

In connection with my brother's case, I venture to suggest that an inquiry should be made into the state of matters in this county of East Lothian, where, by an unscrupulous use of the law of Hypothec for many years past, it has grown into a custom to let the land at an over-rent of from 20 to 50 per cent. and then to take off the over-rent to the tenant very often before one rent was paid, thus giving a fictitious value to the land.

When the tenant refuses to vote according to the wishes of the landowner, or factor, the over-rent is not taken off, and the consequence is, that when bad seasons come he is unable to pay the over-rent, and has to leave the farm. Men trained to agriculture and too old to emigrate were compelled to take the land at an over-rent or leave the business of agriculture, when they had little chance of succeeding in any other business where they would have to compete with men trained to such business from their youth. Few would believe the large amount of money thus given back to tenants in the shape of abatements of rent by some proprietors. I assure you, that I believe there would have been, comparatively speaking, no agricultural depression to complain of, if the law of Hypothec had been abolished with the corn-laws, as by means of this law landowners and their factors have been protected in driving from their farms and homes men who had character, capital, and social position to lose, and intended to pay the rents which they offered, by pitting against them as offerers for farms (under the protection of Government insurance given by the law of Hypothec) men who had none of the qualifications which I have mentioned, and who thought it no disgrace to beg for abatements of rent, make a kind of fraudulent bankruptcy, or change their politics so as to please the landowner or factor, and by doing so obtain a large abatement of rent. Agriculture has thus in this district been thoroughly degraded and demoralised, and there are instances of men voting, at the same election, for the candidate of their landlord's politics in this county, and for the candidate of opposite politics in another constituency where they happen to have a vote. It has come to be regarded as no disgrace for those farmers who have families to accept a subsidy from their landlords to assist in bringing up and educating their families. Under such circumstances a Liberal farmer has no chance, as he will get no abatement, even if he would accept it, the landowners being generally opposed to Liberalism. By this system of pitting men without character or capital, very often from other businesses, against the independent farmers, letting the and to such men at an over-rent, and then reducing it very often before one rent was paid, a fictitious value has been given to land and much suffering

has been the consequence to tenants who had improved farms by much outlay of capital and skill during the currency of a lease, in the belief that the proprietors of the farms they cultivated were men of more than ordinary honour, as their titles implied, who would be above taking advantage of the confidence such tenants had placed in them by maintaining till the end of the lease the fertility of their farms.

I am perfectly astonished at the apathy displayed by the Liberals in these counties as to the cruel treatment which many tenant-farmers who have supported them have received. No class of men, so far as I know, suffer so much for supporting Liberalism as tenant-farmers, and yet the Liberals in this county see one farmer after another crushed and driven off, and never even express sympathy. I know of one case of great hardship, where a tenant who was a consistent Liberal, has been driven out of this county with a family depending on him, who had paid the over-rent during a 19 years' lease, while men who took farms about the same time, and never paid even one year's over-rent, but obtained large abatements on the rents which they had contracted to pay, are still in prosperous circumstances. These men, however, would not I believe, have been relieved of the over-rent if they had not consented to become active supporters of Lord Wemyss, and thus helped to destroy agriculture. With your permission, I would be glad to give you more particulars as to one or two of these cases, where farms have been let publicly for 19 years at an over-rent which was taken off when the rent came to be payable. The over-rent thus taken off amounted to a large sum in the course of a lease, and these tenants became active supporters of the present Lord Wemyss, in helping to retain the unjust game and Hypothec laws, which have enabled landowners to crush and ruin many of the tenants who supported the Liberal party. In this way a system of practical bribery of the very worst kind has been going on for many years past, and if it is allowed to go on it is absurd to expect tenants to vote contrary to the wishes of their landlords: and those who hold Liberal opinions, or intend to be independent, ought never to engage in agriculture in Britain, unless they have sufficient capital to purchase the land which they intend to cultivate.

I have taken the opportunity afforded by my brother's case to call your attention to the treatment of Liberal farmers in East Lothian, as his case is just an attempt in my opinion, to introduce this most disgraceful system into Midlothian, and shows very clearly the terrible cruelty of the law which *protected* over-renting, eviction, and confiscation of tenant's capital, and also the very great control which it gave to the landowners over the political action of the tenantry.

As an elector in this county I may say I have no representative, and I am the son of a Midlothian farmer who was all his life a steady and consistent supporter of the Liberal party, and was turned out of a farm which he had occupied for 31 years, and brought from a state of poverty into high fertility, on account of refusing to vote for the Tory candidate, who was, on one occasion, the owner of his farm. I have farmed in this county for more than 30 years, and have suffered most severely from the Hypothec and game laws, and have paid during that time about £45,000 in rents.

I state these facts to show you that I am likely to have a fair knowledge of agriculture, and am not a mere theorist.

For the sake of agriculture I believe it to be most desirable that some inquiry should be made, and that it would do an immense amount of good at present, as the exposure of the state of matters to which I have alluded would throw a flood of light on the causes of the agricultural depression

which has now existed for some years, and must soon result in much injury to the manufacturing and commercial interests of the country by destroying the home market, which a prosperous agriculture would give. I feel perfectly certain that if such a man as Sir James Caird would report on the agriculture of East Lothian now, in the same way as he reported on many English counties for the *Times* newspaper, in 1850 and 1851, the public would at once see that it was impossible for any industry to exist, far less prosper, under the treatment which the best agriculturists in this county have received resulting from the protection or insurance against loss given to the landowners by the law of Hypothec. I think those of us who have been supporting the Liberal party steadily, for so many years, under such disadvantageous circumstances, and have suffered terribly for doing so, are entitled to ask that our sufferings and wrongs should be made known to the British public. We have men like Lord Salisbury telling us to use our brains more in agriculture, and Mr. Bright telling us to exert ourselves more, when, if the facts were known, we deserve much credit for persevering so long and fighting such a battle against the Tory landowners and their hired and degraded vassals, while at the same time we have been to a great extent deserted by the Liberals, to whom we looked for help. For 35 years we have been struggling to maintain our position, while competing with the agriculturists of other countries, who enjoy better climates, and who are protected against competition from us who have not a vestige of protection in any shape, and yet the landowners have been protected in driving farmers from their homes, as in my brother's case and my own, at the same time confiscating our improvements on the farms, in over-renting us by means of a most unjust and one-sided law, and also in destroying our crops by letting out swarms of game upon them.

If you will kindly look into the subject which I have now brought under your notice, I beg to refer you to Mr. James Melvin, Bonnington, Wilkieston, Midlothian, who has known my brother and myself for many years, and will, I am sure, be able to confirm the statements I have made as to my brother's case. Mr. Melvin has always been an earnest supporter of the Liberal party in Midlothian, and has himself more knowledge of agricultural matters than any one I know in the Lothians. He is aware of the scandalous state of matters which exists in this county, though, perhaps, not to the same extent as those who have to carry on their business in it, and feel more directly the effects of the practice to which I have alluded.

I am, yours respectfully,
(Signed) JAMES M. RUSSELL.

(Copy)

Letter from Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone.

10, Downing-street, Whitehall, 27th November, 1883.

Sir,—Mr. Gladstone has had the honour to receive your letter of the 17th inst., and desires me to inform you that he will communicate on the subject referred to with the Lord Advocate.

I am, sir, your obedient servant,
(Signed) GEORGE SPENCER LYTTLETON.

Mr. J. Russell.

(Copy)

Letter to the Marquis of Tweeddale.

Greendykes, Makmerry, 12th October, 1883.

To the Marquis of Tweeddale.

My Lord,—I wrote to you on 29th August last, calling your attention

to the great injustice done to many farmers who have supported the Liberal party in this county, and particularly to the case of my brother in Midlothian, who voted for you in 1868, and was evicted from his farm for doing so, with a most fearful and shocking result to him, and I might say to myself.

As I have received no reply from you, I think it possible you may not have been at Yester when my letter was delivered there, and that it may have fallen aside in consequence. As the subject is of the greatest importance to me at present, I will take it kind if you will let me know whether or not you are disposed to make such inquiry as I have suggested in my letter of 29th August.

I am, yours respectfully,

(Signed)

JAMES M. RUSSELL.

P.S.—I enclose this letter to Mr. Swinton to be forwarded to you, as I do not know your address at present.

(Intd.)

J. M. R.

(Copy)

Letter from the Marquis of Tweeddale.

Yester, Gifford, Haddington, N.B., 16th October, 1883.

Dear Sir,—I must apologise for not sooner acknowledging yours of the 29th. I left for London immediately after its receipt, and your letter was mislaid.

Before replying to the request you make, may I ask you to mention the laws to which you more particularly refer, and which you describe as "cruel and unfair."

The Scotch system of tenancy has been for many years past based on the principle of complete freedom of contract as between the proprietor of the land and the would-be tenant.

That this freedom did not really exist in the case of small tenancies is quite possible, but as far as my experience goes I have never met a body of men more able to look after their own interests, or more acute at a bargain, than the tenants of this and of adjoining counties.

I am free to admit that there were sound reasons for the legislation of this last session, but not on the ground that farmers were unable to take care of themselves. Perhaps, however, the laws you refer to are not those which I have in my eye at present. I shall, therefore, be glad to know which they are, if they still exist.

Faithfully yours,

TWEEDDALE.

(Copy)

Letter to the Marquis of Tweeddale,

Greendykes, Makmerry, East Lothian, 22nd October, 1883.

To the Marquis of Tweeddale.

My Lord,—I have received your letter of 16th October. The laws I refer to as cruel and unjust are the Hypothec and the game laws.

By the law of Hypothec a landowner was protected and insured against loss when in letting a farm he pitted a man who had neither character, capital, nor social position to lose against a tenant who was possessed of these qualifications. By the game laws, a landowner was protected in destroying a tenant's crops by swarms of game, and this sometimes to a ruinous extent. Many landowners, taking advantage of the protection given to them by the law of Hypothec, let their farms 50 per cent. above the fair rent, bringing in men from other businesses, men of insufficient capital, or young men not properly trained to agriculture, and pitting them as offerers against farmers who had sufficient capital, and had been trained to agriculture, and in many cases had improved the farms which they occupied at very great expenditure

of capital and precious time, thus forced up the rents unfairly, besides turning out of their homes at much inconvenience and loss well-trying and deserving tenants.

Men trained to farming, who engaged in agriculture about the time the corn-laws were repealed, were compelled, after finishing a 19 years' lease, to compete with such men as I have referred to, or leave the business when too old to learn another, or emigrate. I think it most cruel and unjust to drive such men from Britain, when advanced in life, and their capital exhausted by the over-rent which they were obliged to pay. I found in my own experience that while over-rented, owing to Hypothec, when I had by many years of patient industry brought a worn-out farm into high condition, a landowner was protected in destroying my crops with game to a ruinous extent, and in pitting against me as an offerer at the end of the lease, a lad who had no proper training in agriculture, and neither sufficient skill nor capital for the farm, who just undid all I had done in improving the farm, as far as he could, and when he had exhausted the condition I had put into it, managed to get rid of it at a time when he had an opportunity of getting into another at a low rent.

Your lordship says that the Scotch system of tenancy has been for many years on the principle of complete freedom of contract. Now, in my opinion, this has not been the case, because the landlord had an undue advantage in being protected by the Hypothec and game-laws. As the landowner had protection and the tenant had none, there was no freedom of contract, and no fair-play for the tenant.

As to the Scotch tenants being able to take care of themselves, I would remind you how Mr. George Hope was driven from his farm, as also Mr. Sadler, who was the first I believe to suggest Mr. Hope being brought forward as a candidate for this county. The successors of these farmers were unable to go on to the end of their leases. I remind you also of what has happened to my brother and to myself. These cases are all in this immediate neighbourhood, and within the last few years. There have been very many similar I have no doubt all over Scotland, and going back for many years.

A case of great hardship is that of Mr. Aitken, who came to the farm of Sunnyside, in this county, about 1855. He took that farm at a rent of about £1,400. He paid that rent to the end of the 19 years' lease, with the exception of 10 per cent. returned to him for one crop which was seriously damaged by a hail-storm. I believe he paid an over-rent of 50 per cent. for 19 years. Mr. Aitken was a thoroughly honest and honourable man, and considered he was bound in honour to pay the rent he had promised, but the very fact of his paying the rent, as in many other cases, told against him at the end of the lease, and he had to leave because he would not agree to give the rent which the proprietor asked.

Now I am told that Mr. Paton, who entered to the farm of Standingstone, near Sunnyside, a few years later, did not pay for even one crop the rent which he had promised, but made a new arrangement for a reduction of 20 per cent. for the 19 years. Even after this substantial reduction I believe he was allowed to have three crops without any rent during the currency of the lease. He, however, did all in his power to help the present Lord Wemyss in retaining the laws I have referred to, and thus assisted in destroying the agriculture of East Lothian. The large sum given to this tenant in annual abatements and three years' entire rent does not seem to have been given on account of his poverty, because during the course of his lease he took a large breadth of land in Fife, and always kept hunters and race-horses, and still does so.

I made a calculation which shows that if Mr. Aitken had got the same abatements as Mr. Paton, and invested the money as he got it from the landlord at $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., it would have amounted to £12,000 at the end of the 19 years, and if he had got his lease renewed on the same terms as another tenant on the Earl of Wemyss' estate, the difference in treatment would have amounted to about £40,000 at the end of the second lease. I cannot contrast Sunnyside and Standingstone for the second lease, because Mr. Paton left his farm unlettable. Mr. Aitken having been thus obliged to leave Sunnyside, took a neighbouring farm at as moderate a rent as he could, but soon found it was over-rented, and when the calamitous seasons came the over-rent which he had paid in Sunnyside left him without sufficient capital to stand the disastrous seasons, and he had to retire from farming. I fear I may say that he has been ruined in agriculture. Now the farm of Sunnyside is let to a tailor, and to him it is said the over-rent has been taken off. The tailor is a keen supporter of Toryism, and there can be no doubt that he got the over-rent taken off for helping that party.

My brother's case was in some respects similar. He, like Mr. Aitken, was an honest and honourable man, and paid the rent he had promised for 19 years, although he considered he was paying more than the fair value of the farm, and was obliged to leave because he refused to pay more.

In contrast with my brother's treatment, I will state the case of Mr. Gaukroger, in the farm of Southfield, and Mr. Stodart, in Wintonhill.

The farm of Southfield, on the estate of Lord Wemyss, and adjoining this farm of Greendykes, was let about the same time as Saughton Hall, to a wool merchant, Mr. Gaukroger. He, like Paton, made a new arrangement for 20 per cent. reduction at the beginning of the lease, and got besides abatements from the reduced rent in bad seasons when the other tenants on the estate got them. Now, mark the difference at the end of the 19 years' lease. The wool merchant, who only paid 16s. a pound of the rent agreed on during the 19 years, got a new lease for another 19 years at a further reduction of 25 per cent. off the reduced rent, or 40 per cent. below the rent agreed on in 1860, besides getting the proprietor to expend money in buildings and fencing, while my brother had to leave his farm because he would not pay a higher rent still than that at which he took the farm in 1860.

Here again, we have the trained farmer ruined, and the wool merchant kept in agriculture by an annual subsidy from the landlord of 40 per cent. of the rental.

Now this wool merchant has a son, and if at present I were to give up this farm of Greendykes, because I have never received any abatement, and still pay the over-rent, I find that the wool merchant has received from the Earl of Wemyss abatements, which with interest, as I have said before, would amount to about £7,000, a sum sufficient to stock this farm for his son.

The over-rent in the case of Southfield, also, has no doubt been taken off, in return for assistance given to the Tory party, as Mr. Gaukroger, who was, before his entry to the farm, a Liberal and Free Churchman, became a Tory and an Established Churchman after getting the abatements from Lord Wemyss. That he was compelled to abandon his own principles is further proved by the fact, that at one election he is known to have voted for the Radical candidate in a burgh and the Tory in this county. In his case, as well as Mr. Paton's, the abatements cannot have been given on account of his poverty, as he has a lucrative business in addition to his farm.

The farm of Wintonhill was also let to Mr. Stodart, about the same time as Saughton Hall was let to my brother. The rent agreed on was about £1,400. The tenant, I believe, never paid this rent, but got a substantial reduction,

and I believe that before the end of my brother's lease of Saughton Hall, while he was still paying the rent of £1,800, at which he took the farm in 1860, Mr. Stodart had got Wintonhill reduced from £1,400 to £800, besides very large sums expended on buildings, without any interest being charged to the tenant, and it is said that the rent is now fixed under £700, or less than half the rent at which the farm was let about the year 1862.

In addition, a new railway was put through this farm with a station near the centre of it, about the year 1870, adding very greatly to the value of the farm, the tenant also receiving a large sum as damages for the railway going through the farm. Mr. Stodart has also been an active supporter of Toryism, canvassing for Lord Wemyss, and doing all in his power to help in the destruction of agriculture, and I do not believe he would have got such abatements if he had been a Liberal.

Referring again to your lordship's remark about Scotch farmers being able to take care of themselves, I have to say, in my own defence, that there is no doubt all who chose agriculture as a business about the time the corn-laws were repealed made a terrible mistake; but surely no young man, with the knowledge or experience we all have at the age when we choose our professions, could be expected to know that the British nation would act so cruelly and unjustly to any class, especially to the agriculturists, when they had just taken off the laws which protected their industry and exposed them to competition with agriculturists who enjoyed more favourable climates, cheaper government, and were protected against the importations of food grown by British farmers as has been the case.

For my own part, when I selected agriculture as a business, I did not know that the law of Hypothec was such a formidable weapon for destroying farmers. I supposed the British nation to be the most honourable in the world, and never dreamed that they would be guilty of such glaring injustice to any class. I also believed that the proprietors, as a rule, were, as their titles would lead any one to suppose, men of the highest honour, above taking an undue advantage of such a law as Hypothec. The British nation, I believe, allowed the laws to remain in the same belief.

My father, when taking the farm of Coalston-mains for me, was assured by Lord Dalhousie's commissioner that his lordship would never allow a tenant to suffer loss by game.

It is right to say that all proprietors have not taken advantage of the Hypothec law to over-rent their farms. In this county the tenantry on the estates of your lordship's father, the Earl of Hopetoun, the late Mr. Anderson, of St. Germain's, Mr. Mitchell Innes, and others, have been kindly treated. The tenantry are now, however, showing their disposition to take care of themselves, as you say, by retiring from British agriculture; for in this county the land is mostly being let to men from other businesses or their sons, and in very many cases not being let at all, though advertised. I am informed that this is also the state of matters in other districts of Scotland. I was told by a farmer residing in Roxburghshire, on whose statement I can rely, that almost no farmers are now taking land there, but that shopkeepers and men of that class are taking the farms. I have often heard of landlords finding it difficult to make farming pay in ordinary times; and if they, with their superior education, intelligence, and wealth, and generally knowing much of agriculture, have not been able to cultivate the land profitably, is it to be supposed for a moment that the cultivation will be carried on at a profit by tailors, butchers, blacksmiths, railway station-masters, masons, gamekeepers, and coal-carters, especially now when more than ever skill is required in agriculture. I may add that one of the three joint-tenants, who now

occupy the farm of Saughton Hall, was a butcher with a very small business which small business, however, was believed to be too large for his capital.

I believe that landowners have generally insisted on the retention of these unjust laws because they did not know the injury they were doing to agriculture. The parties most to blame, I think, are men of the valuator class, several of them farming extensively themselves, and for the sake of their pay as valuers and large abatements from their rents, or the favourable position in which their conduct placed them for obtaining farms at a moderate rent without being advertised, these men have been base enough to help in destroying their neighbours.

At an interview which I had with Lord Rosebery, while he was Secretary of State for Scotland, he said that he held it proved that much of the land in this county had been let 50 per cent. above the fair rent. I had been giving him evidence to that effect, and was going on to the case of Kidlaw, in your own neighbourhood, when his lordship said I need not go into that case, as he already knew the facts about it.

In writing to you first, after I determined to do what I could to help in exposing the cruel treatment of my brother, I thought it was due to you from the high position you occupy in the county and the help you had given to the oppressed farmers in 1868.

I would again most respectfully but earnestly urge your lordship to lose no time in making inquiry into this matter. I am entitled to ask this of you on account of the great losses and suffering endured by my brother and myself because we have supported the Liberal party. You cannot surely allow your supporters to be "quietly got rid off" and Tories put into their farms, as has been done in Fenton Barns, Ferrygate, Saughton Hall, Sunnyside, and, as I have shown you, very possibly into this farm soon. This would be acting like a general who allowed the enemy to destroy his private soldiers and took no steps to put a stop to the destruction, but kept on good terms with the general of the enemy. The four farms I have mentioned are prominent cases in our own neighbourhood, and occur to me as I write. I do not doubt there are many similar cases in this and other districts.

I am prepared to show that if I now retire from agriculture it is just because of the want of ordinary fair-play; and I am prepared, if you wish it, to allow you to make an inquiry into my management since the time I came into this county, which will show that in place of good farming being encouraged, it has hitherto been to a great extent discouraged and crushed in this county.

In making these remarks I admit at once that I have made many mistakes, and that my management has not been by any means perfect; but I believe it will be found above the average of the district, as I was determined when I came to the county to make every exertion to be, at any rate, as good a farmer as my neighbours; and I was supported in this by my father, who helped me liberally by giving me capital to expend on the farm, and the best advice he could after forty years' experience in Lothian agriculture.

There surely must be something very far wrong when men like Mr. Hope, Mr. Sadler, Mr. Aitken, my brother, and myself, are driven out of agriculture after paying the full rent to the end, and men come prominently forward as agriculturists, in societies and elsewhere, such as Messrs. Paton, Gaukroger, and Stodart, who after trying it were unable to maintain their position as agriculturists in this county for even one year, and must have retired if they had not received help from the owners of their farms, in return for which they had to become active agents in destroying agriculture.

If this driving away of the real rent-paying farmers is to continue, and

their places are to be filled up as in the past by men content to live in a state of dependence on the landowners or their agents, then surely all farmers who have supported the Liberals in East and Mid-Lothian made a great mistake. I advised my brother to vote for you, while Sir J. G. Baird urged him to vote for Lord Dalkeith. Now, was I not much to blame in advising my brother to take a course which has had such a fearful result for him? If the Liberals whom we supported, and from whom we hoped to receive help, refuse to take any interest in the difficulties into which we have been brought by taking their side, I think we must bring the matter before the Tory party. It will be most humbling and disappointing if, after all, we have to go to Lord Wemyss and say: We made a great mistake in opposing you; we confess our error, and we humbly ask you to interfere on our behalf, because our friends the Liberals, having led us into the difficulty, refuse to do anything for us.

I may mention that having nearly a year ago brought the state of matters to the notice of a friend, who is a merchant in Leith, he said that if the general public only knew the destruction which had been brought on agriculture they would be appalled. I was struck to-day by a neighbour of mine, also non-agricultural, to whom I explained matters, also using the word "appalling" in connection with it, although he was not aware that another had done so nearly a year ago.

I would have liked to reply to your lordship's letter without the loss of a day, but this is a very busy season with me, and I have a great deal of work at present; and I have been anxious to make no statement in my letter to you which was not carefully considered, and will, I hope, be found on inquiry to be strictly correct, or as nearly so as circumstances will permit.

I am, yours respectfully,
(Signed)

JAMES M. RUSSELL.

Greendykes, Makmerry, East Lothian, 20th September, 1884.

Sir,—Your correspondent, "J. M.," asks me to give the name of the farm of 560 acres which required 32 able-bodied men to work it. If he will read my letter more carefully he will see that there is no such statement in it as that 32 able-bodied men were required to work the farm I alluded to.

I stated that the annual sum paid in labour on the farm about 18 years ago amounted to £1,200, and that, under the landlord's management, it was said the amount paid in labour would within a year be reduced to £300; whereas, if the tenant's management had been continued, the labour bill now would have amounted to £1,600, and that in this way the tenant would have been extracting from the land and distributing amongst the labourers in the district £1,300 a year more than the landlord can do. This, I said, was equivalent to driving 26 farm-servants and their families out of the district, allowing £50 a year as the average income of a farm-labourer. As "J. M." asks the name of the farm, I see no reason why I should not give it. The farm I allude to is Coalston-mains, on the estate of Coalston, and in the parish of Haddington. The landlord is the Right Hon. Robert Bourke, M.P. for King's Lynn, and I was tenant of the farm from 1850 till 1869.

It may be interesting to state some further facts showing how the refusal of the British nation to give the relief to tenant-farmers which they had for many years been asking before 1865—and which they asked for in that year in a very marked manner, simultaneously in England and Scotland, by bringing forward Mr. C. S. Read as a tenant-farmer candidate for a division of Norfolk, and Mr. George Hope for East Lothian—has tended to check the improvement then going on in agriculture, and thus lessening the sums paid

in labour has caused the labourers to leave the agricultural districts and go to the towns or emigrate. I find that I paid for labour, in my first year on Coalston-mains, £507; in my fourth year, £714; in my seventh year, £1,136; and in the year ending 31st October, 1867, £1,263. Seeing no prospect of relief two years after Mr. Hope's candidature, I was compelled to stop my improving system, and prepare for leaving the farm, reducing the labour payments as much as possible, so that in the next year ending 31st October, 1868, the amount paid was £942, and from that date till 26th May, 1870, £804. It would be interesting to know the labour paid on the same farm since I left, because I believe that, in place of a gradual increase, as in my tenancy, there will have been a gradual decrease, till it may reach £100 a year in two years, when the farm has been laid down for grazing and sporting purposes. I do not know the exact acreage of Coalston estate, but at the election of 1865 there were seven tenants who, as far as I know, voted for Mr. Hope, and these men have all been driven off. The number of farmers and labourers driven from this one estate in the heart of East Lothian is very striking, and this process is going on in the same district to a very great extent on other estates. It is well known that the same process of depopulation has been going on in many counties of England and Scotland to a very great extent since 1865. My statements as to the depopulation are confirmed by the speeches of Lord Rosebery and Mr. Joseph Arch at the recent Trades Union Congress, held in Aberdeen. Lord Rosebery stated that in the last ten years the urban population had increased 17 per cent., while the rural and agricultural population had decreased nearly 4 per cent. Mr. Arch stated that he could point to 7,000 acres of land in Wiltshire which had not been cultivated for five years, and that in the eastern counties of England there was a tract of land fourteen miles long and seven miles broad lying waste. Surely this destruction of British agriculture, and the home market which a prosperous agriculture would have given, must be a very serious loss to the manufacturing and commercial classes. Admitting that these classes are fairly prosperous at present, they would certainly have been much more so if agriculture had been encouraged, and not sacrificed as it has been in many districts for the sake of the political power and the sport of the landlords.

I am, &c.,

JAMES M. RUSSELL.

Letter sent to the Editor of *Edinburgh Daily Review*.

Sir,—You did much service to the cause of agriculture by bringing under the notice of your readers on two occasions recently the great injustice from which the Nonconformist farmers in this county have been suffering for many years past, and the consequence of that injustice in many of them having been driven from their farms. Very few, if any, of your readers have the slightest idea of the sufferings of these farmers, and the very large sums which have been exacted from them in the shape of over-rent, imposed on them by the operation of the feudal law of Hypothec, under which it was just as impossible for a farmer to hire a farm at a low rent as it was for a labourer to buy his bread at a low price while the old corn-laws existed. You gave an instance of a Nonconformist farmer who had been driven from this county after paying £9,000 in a 19 years' lease, more than he would have done if he had been treated by his landlord in the same way as his neighbours who supported Toryism and the Established Church. There are very many similar cases in this country. If I guess rightly as to the case to which you alluded you might have added that the kindness of the landlord in giving the tenant relief from the over-rent which he had agreed to pay to such a large amount

had the effect of inducing the tenant to give up Liberalism and become a most active and energetic supporter of Toryism, and to give up his attendance on a Free Church and become a very prominent supporter of the Established Church. There are instances of the Nonconformist farmers paying £13,000, £12,000, £10,000, and so on down to £4,000, in the course of their leases, more than they would have done if treated like the neighbouring farmers who support the Tories and the Established Church. In seasons disastrous for agriculture, such as we have had for ten years past, the withholding of the abatement from the Nonconformists which is given to their Tory neighbours, tells all the more severely that, as a rule, the Nonconformists had to compete in the public market for their farms when they took them, and were thus, under the protection to landlords given by the law of Hypothec, pitted against men without character or capital, who had nothing to lose, and could, therefore, offer recklessly. Consequently, Nonconformists generally had to hire their farms at much higher rents than the Tory farmers, who are in this county treated as friends by the landlords, and get farms privately and at much lower rents than the Nonconformists, because they are not exposed to the fictitious competition caused by the law of Hypothec, nor to eviction and confiscation of their capital at the end of their leases. The road-rates, school-rates, poor-rates, registration and public health rates, &c., are now all charged according to rental, so that in addition to a much higher rent the Nonconformist farmer now pays a very unequal share of all these rates. The gross and glaring iniquity of the burdens laid on the Nonconformist farmers in this county as contrasted with their Tory neighbours is now perfectly scandalous, and no longer tolerable, and no greater service could be done to agriculture than for some energetic lover of justice to take the matter up and expose the oppression which has already ruined so many Nonconformist tenant-farmers, and is likely soon to ruin more, many of them the very best agriculturists. It is surely a disgrace to our modern Christianity that such treatment of an industrious class, who for conscience' sake pay their own ministers, and thus quietly keep up a protest against the Established Church in the very stronghold of Toryism, should be allowed to go on unnoticed. May the indifference of the ministers and Churches to such sufferings of their humble supporters not be, to a great extent, the reason of so many now giving up attendance at public worship?

Some of your readers may have also noted the extraordinary way in which the Liberal party in this county persistently ignore the well-known and notorious depression in its agriculture, which no honest man can deny. You quoted from speeches of Lord Elcho and the Conservative agent for this county, descriptive of the ruined state of agriculture, the empty farmhouses, the broken hopes and the dying out of the tenantry, or, as it might perhaps be stated, the killing out of the tenantry. Why are the Liberals, as the supporters of Mr. Gladstone's Government are still called, so anxious to conceal the ruined state of agriculture and all the sufferings of the Nonconformist farmers? Is it not because the Church, which many of them still wish to uphold, has been the chief upholder of the cruel land-laws, without which it would have been impossible for the landlords or their agents to have crushed and driven off the Nonconformist tenantry?

This county is entirely agricultural, and its agriculture was at one time acknowledged to be the most advanced in Britain. Such being the case one would naturally suppose, when we are having such a great amount of speechifying by Liberals in all parts of the county, and so much writing in the local papers, that some reference would occasionally be made to its only industry, especially in such an unprecedented agricultural crisis as we now have, and

that some measures for the relief or revival of agriculture would be a principal topic with the speakers. On the contrary, all reference to agriculture seems to bestudiously avoided. The Liberal Association of this county know perfectly well how many of their most long-tried and faithful supporters, the Nonconformists, have been crushed, oppressed, and evicted on account of their adherence to their principles, and yet they look on with the most disgraceful and cold-hearted apathy and indifference. Their conduct in this respect presents a very marked contrast to the Tory party, who treat their humblest supporters as friends and reward them well for their assistance. Farmers on the estates of Tory proprietors who support the landlords have nothing to fear in the very worst times, for to them the landlords are kind and liberal, and would never evict them or annoy them about the rent. The Liberal Association seems to hold and practise the diabolical doctrine that the private soldiers, as I have heard the tenant-farmers called, must be sacrificed. The Liberal Association of this county evidently exists not for the benefit or welfare of agriculture but for some other purpose. Lord Salisbury spoke the other day of the "stolid and apathetic indifference to the prevalence of the great distress in agriculture shown by Her Majesty's Government." No one who knows anything at all about agriculture can deny that Lord Salisbury is quite right in what he said, and this apathy and indifference is conspicuous in the Liberal party from Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Bright downwards. The Haddingtonshire Liberals follow the example of their leaders, and they are either shamefully ignorant or most culpably and disgracefully neglectful of their duty in doing nothing to help those who have suffered so much for them as many tenant-farmers in this county have done. The cool way in which they at present ignore the interests of agriculture in this county is a downright insult to everyone who has any regard for that industry; and every friend of agriculture, if he cannot see it is his duty to vote for Lord Elcho, should at any rate refuse to give the slightest support or countenance to a party which treats this long-suffering industry with insult and contempt in the time of its very greatest extremity, when, indeed, as Mr. Chaplin most truly said in the House of Commons in February, 1883, "Agriculture has for some years been struggling for its very existence." I believe it may with truth be said that agriculture is now practically dead in East Lothian, as the correspondent of the *Mark Lane Express* reported that it was practically dead in the county of Suffolk in September last.

I am sorry this letter is so long, but I hope your readers will keep in mind that we have no agricultural paper in Scotland to expose the iniquitous treatment of the Nonconformist tenant-farmers. We are now in such a small minority that the agricultural and local papers must allow us to be sacrificed. I suppose that the very great majority of the readers of a Scotch agricultural paper, as well as our local papers, are the Tory landlords and the tenants and others interested in agriculture who are their friends, and these papers therefore cannot afford to offend such men. We are under a great obligation to you for the articles which you have written, as, by doing so, you have brought the subject before the public.—I am, &c.,

JAMES M. RUSSELL.

Greendykes, East Lothian, 2nd May, 1885.

NOTE.—When this Letter appeared in the *Edinburgh Daily Review*, a considerable portion of it was omitted owing to want of space.

(Copy)

Greendykes, Makmerry, East Lothian.

The Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone.

August 4th, 1885.

Sir,—I wrote to you on 17th Nov., 1883, bringing under your notice the case of my brother, John Russell, who was evicted from the farm of Saughton Hall Mains, in Midlothian, by Sir James Gardiner Baird in 1879, entirely, as I believe, on account of his steady adherence to the Liberal party, and especially on account of support he gave to Lord William Hay, now Marquis of Tweeddale, when he contested Midlothian in 1868. During the canvass of Lord William Hay he was urged by Sir J. G. Baird not to vote for the Disestablishment of the Irish Church, and as he remained true to the principles which he as well as his father and his family had long held, he was got rid of from the farm which he and his father had occupied for 38 years in a very disgraceful and underhand manner. After his eviction he returned to the county from a distance to record his vote in your favour, notwithstanding the entire want of help or sympathy he had received from the Midlothian Liberals. His eviction broke his heart, and he is now permanently unfitted for business, when little past his prime for agriculture, and is an inmate of the Crichton Asylum, near Dumfries.

Henry George, when in Britain, exposed a somewhat similar case of a doctor who voted for Sir Sidney Waterlow when he contested Dumfriesshire against the Duke of Buccleuch's candidate, and who having had to leave Scotland in consequence of instructions given by the duke's factor that he was not to be employed, tried to establish a practice in a town in England, but did not succeed in England and soon died. When Sir S. Waterlow was informed of what had taken place he went down to see the doctor, and, after his death, took his family to London and provided for them. I am glad to say my brother requires no pecuniary assistance, and has no family depending on him, never having married. I would have called your attention a second time to my brother's case some time ago, but knowing the overwhelming nature of your work for years past, I did not wish to trouble you. I tried to get an interview with you when in Scotland last autumn, but was not successful. I cannot believe that you would allow any of your supporters, however humble, to be destroyed for steady adherence to principle, without ordering some inquiry into the circumstances, and I now bring the matter before you again. I am also compelled to bring my own case before you at the same time. I came into this county in 1850 from Midlothian, where my father, and my brother after him, farmed for 70 years, and I am now compelled to retire from British agriculture from no fault of my own, as can easily be shown; but on account of the ingenious method now adopted in this county for getting rid of all who have opposed the Earl of Wemyss so long, as Lord Elcho, member for East Lothian. I have brought the subject of the expulsion of the Liberal tenant-farmers from this county under the notice of a very great number of public men during the last two years, but I am sorry to say with very little success. I observe that Mr. Forster stated the other day that the assassination of Lord Frederick Cavendish and Mr. Burke had saved Ireland, and it does seem to be a fact that nothing less than some such horrid business in Scotland will arouse influential parties to the fearful sufferings which have been endured in Scotland for many years by those tenant-farmers who took the side of Liberalism and more especially of Disestablishment. The method adopted for getting rid of Liberals is to withhold the abatements of rent during the unprecedentedly disastrous seasons for agriculture which we have had for ten years past. As by the law of Hypothec all farmers who remained in

Britain were compelled to take their land far above the fair rent, generally 50 per cent, or a half-rent, it has been impossible, as a rule, for the most skilful and economical farmers to pay this large amount of over-rent in such disastrous seasons as we have recently had, even when in consequence of the destruction of the tenant-farmer class so long protected by the British laws, they had been prevented marrying, and were giving to the landlords in the shape of over-rent the money which should have gone to rear and educate farmers' families. There are many cases around me of the best agriculturists and most honest and respectable men being got rid of by the means to which I have alluded. As you are aware, it has been the long-established practice in the management of landed property in Britain to give large abatements of rent in disastrous times, so as to allow the tenants to remain in their farms. This was no more than honest in landed proprietors, seeing that they had special feudal privileges in the shape of laws which gave them protection for over-renting, for maintaining their political power, for their Church, and even for their sport. During the last ten years the abatements of rent given by such men as the Duke of Bedford, the Duke of Leinster, the Earl of Wemyss, and the Duke of Buccleuch have amounted to enormous sums of money. In my own case the method by which I am compelled to leave Britain, by which in fact I am banished with confiscation of, I may say, all my capital, is to refuse to give the abatements which are being given on neighbouring estates, such as those of the Earl of Wemyss, Lady Ruthven, Lord Blantyre, and indeed, I might say, all honourable or honest landlords. As I began farming in 1850, with what may be called a large capital for East Lothian, I have a high rent, though I have not unduly extended my farming operations during the last 35 years. The estate on which the farm is was sold some years ago, and now belongs to the son of a wealthy Glasgow brewer, who seems neither to know nor care about the usual practice of landed proprietors. I have asked to be dealt with as other tenants who have feudal leases—that is, leases entered into before the abolition of the protection to landlords given by the law of Hypothec—are dealt with on the neighbouring estate of Lord Wemyss, but the landlord declines to do so, and has threatened to take proceedings against me, although I have already paid him £4,800 more than I would have done if I had been treated in the same way as the Earl of Wemyss' tenants.

I have two farms, and the other farm is under the management of tutors, the proprietor having died since my entry. The agents for this farm say the law gives tutors no power to make abatements, and as they are in somewhat straitened financial circumstances, they propose to sacrifice me and confiscate my capital in the farm "feloniously," according to the late Lord Clarendon, for the sake of the family of a foolish man who was improvident during his life-time. It seems a monstrous state of matters that landlords' agents, lawyers who may know very little of agriculture, should be allowed to banish a tenant and confiscate his capital at their pleasure. I may state that to another farmer on the same estate, who attends the Established Church, very large abatements are said to have been given, though this is kept secret as much as possible, and the tenant of the adjoining farm, consisting of above 500 acres, on the same estate, also an attendant of the Established Church, was allowed to relinquish his farm, taken under the same circumstances as mine, some years ago. To show you how tenant-farmers who support the Liberal party have suffered, and are still suffering from having to take their farms at such a great over-rent if they remained in Britain, I may mention that my brother, who was evicted in 1879, had paid, during his 19 years' lease, £17,000 more than a tenant on the estate of

Lady Ruthven, who made his contract in the same way, but was relieved of the over-rent which he had contracted to pay, and that if he had agreed to pay the rent asked for, a new lease by Sir J. G. Baird's agent, he would have paid, at the end of 38 years, £65,000 more than the same tenant on Lady Ruthven's estate. This calculation is made on the understanding that the tenant who receives an abatement invests it at $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. The tenant on Lady Ruthven's estate was an active supporter of Lord Wemyss and the Established Church. The contrast I have stated between my brother and the tenant on Lady Ruthven's estate is only one instance of many, and shows how the Liberal tenant-farmers are gradually crushed and driven off by over-rent, confiscation and eviction. I send a reprint of an extract from a speech by Mr. Rae, President of the Scottish Farmers' Alliance, testifying to the oppression going on in East and Midlothian. I enclose printed copies of letters from myself and my medical adviser to the agents for the landlords of this farm, dated 25th April and 5th May last. I also enclose written copy of letter from my medical adviser sent to the agents of my other farm yesterday. I enclose also extracts from speech of Lord Elcho, in January, 1883, and of his agents in 1882, confirming my statements. The farm I occupied in 1862 was in the district alluded to by Lord Elcho. I assure you that the mental affections of my brother and myself can be completely accounted for by the operation of the awful law of Hypothec, abused as it has been by ignorant or cruel land agents. In confirmation of this I give you four cases from the one parish of Dirleton in this county. Mr. Sadler, the first to introduce the steam plough into this county, seeing that it was out of the question to introduce steam cultivation without a change in the law, took a leading part in inducing Mr. George Hope, a farmer in the same parish, to contest this county in opposition to Lord Wemyss, in 1865. For this he was evicted by Mr. Nisbet Hamilton. He went to a premature grave. Mr. Hope was also evicted for opposing Lord Elcho, and he went soon to his grave. Some of his friends know his mind was affected by his eviction and believe he was killed by it.

Mr. Hay, a tenant on the estate of the Hon Robert Bourke, was compelled to pay fifty per cent. additional rent under pain of eviction. He wished to keep his home for his family, and tried to pay the rent and half. His mental health gave way within a few years, and he committed suicide. Within the last three months, Mr. Rintoul, a fourth tenant in Dirleton parish, one of the hardest and strongest men I know, required an attendant night and day for some time on account of his mental health, and his wife had to go to the lawyer's office in Edinburgh to beg for some mercy about his rent-paying. If this has occurred in one parish, you may judge what is going on over Scotland. In further confirmation of my statements, I enclose printed letter of Rev. John Ker, D.D., Professor in the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland. Also extracts from supplementary memorandum by Mr. Clay, to Report of Agricultural Commission made in 1882, and some other reprints corroborative of my statements.

In an extract from a speech by Mr. Asher, late Solicitor-General, you will see he alludes to the slowness and cruelty of the process adopted towards us. The cruelty is proved, I think, by such cases as my brother's and my own, as well as the others I have alluded to. The injustice is increased by the fact that while the supporters of the Liberal party are quietly crushed and destroyed by this slow and cruel process, the farmers who have supported the Tories have no suffering. The landlords and agents look on them as friends, and relieve them at once. Indeed, as they are not evicted from their farms as the Liberals are, they are not exposed at all to the brunt of the

Hypothec, or game laws, and obtain their farms at fair rents. Practically, they have fair rents and fixity of tenure.

I have now called your attention to the extraordinary state of matters in this district. I earnestly entreat you to give instructions for an immediate inquiry, as the matter is most urgent. I venture to suggest, that as you require rest, and propose going on a yachting excursion, you should ask Mr. Chamberlain to communicate with me. I observed that he and Mr. Jesse Collings had been making enquiry as to the condition of agricultural districts in England; and I know Mr. Chamberlain sympathises with Non-conformists, and will not hesitate to let in full light on the whole state of matters. I send a letter of introduction from Mr. Rae, president of the Scottish Farmers' Alliance, which I got from him before I went to London, a few weeks ago. I may add, that for some years I have been hoping that some method would be found of exposing the awful injustice and cruelty from which the honest and industrious farmers in this district have been suffering if they farmed well and enriched their land. When a farm was in high condition at the expiry of a lease, many landlords have been unable to resist the temptation to evict the good tenants and let the farm at a high rent, which they obtained from some unprincipled tenant, as long as the evicted tenant's unexhausted manure continued to give good crops, when the new tenant generally threw up the farm in an impoverished condition—thus punishing good farmers and giving a premium to bad farming. To quote the words of Dr. Ker, to whom I have already referred, at a recent conversation with him: "The Scotch farmer has hitherto been treated as a hive of bees; the better he farmed, the more industrious he was, the sooner he was ready for 'smeeking' by the landlord." I have read the *Daily News* ever since it exposed Bulgarian horrors in 1878, as I felt sure the time would come for the sufferings of agriculturists in this district to be exposed. I have been astonished at the apathy of the British nation to the welfare of agriculture; and Mr. Everitt, hon. secretary of the London Farmers' Alliance, told me, a few weeks ago, that our only course was to go to the United States of America, as *no paper* in Britain would publish our wrongs. I hope this letter will reach you before you set out on your excursion, and that you will ask some one to attend to the business in your absence.

With the greatest respect, I am, yours truly,

(Signed)

JAMES M. RUSSELL.

(Copy)

1, Richmond-terrace, Whitehall, August 8th, 1885.

Sir,—I am directed by Mr. Gladstone to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 4th inst., and to express his regret at the circumstances as stated therein.

A reform of the Land Laws, he has desired me to add, has generally been recognised as necessary by the Liberal party.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Mr. James Russell.

G. LEVESON-GOWER.

(Copy)

Greendykes, Makmerry, East Lothian, August 8th, 1885.

My Lord Duke,—I write to you as one of the trustees of the late Sir J. G. Suttie, in regard to the farm of Dolphingston, on the estate of Preston-grange, of which I have been tenant since 1878. The agents for the trustees, Messrs. Mackenzie, Innes, and Logan, have taken me very much by surprise by a very sudden intimation, given on Saturday last, that unless a large sum of money is paid down almost immediately they will sequester my farm

stocking. From peculiar circumstances in several respects this proceeding is more than usually harassing in my case. I have been tenant of this farm of Greendykes since 1872. The estate of St. Germain's, on which the farm is, was sold after my entry to the trustees of Mr. Tennent, a wealthy Glasgow brewer, and these trustees declined to make any re-arrangement about the rent, as all landlords have been doing during the recent disastrous agricultural depression, saying that when the trusteeship expired, as it did on 31st October last, the landlord could do as he liked about re-arrangement, and might deal liberally with me. No arrangement has yet been come to, as the agents for the landlord do not seem to take the same view of dealing with tenants during a succession of bad seasons, which it is well-known to all engaged in agriculture—the landlords as a body do, that is, trying to help their tenants through the bad times, if on inquiry they find that no blame is attached to the tenant for the trying position in which he is placed. On Monday, 27th July, Dr. Kirkwood, of Glasgow, who acts for Mr. Tennent, met some friends of mine in my agent's office in Edinburgh, and expressed most friendly sentiments towards me, and I was very much shocked when I found that, on the Saturday of the same week, Dr. Kirkwood had completely changed his mind, and intimated that a sequestration would be put on my farm stocking unless a new arrangement was made almost immediately. He gives as his reason for this sudden change, that the agents for Sir J. G. Suttie's trustees wished to take that course, and he must go along with them. Messrs. Mackenzie, Innes, and Logan have not been willing to give me what I consider an adequate abatement, saying that the trustees had no power to do so, and, in consequence, there is a large amount of arrears hanging over me at present. I feel quite certain that if you fully understood the position of matters, an amicable arrangement would be come to without resorting to sequestration, and I write to ask you if you would not telegraph to your agents to delay proceedings for a day or two in the hope of a satisfactory arrangement being made. I believe Mr. Todrick, of Haddington, acts for you there. I have had no conversation with him on the subject, but I am inclined to think if he could be consulted he would be able to suggest some way out of the difficulty. He has the highest standing in Haddington as a man of business, being procurator, fiscal, and agent for the Bank of Scotland, and from having had the management of several estates, he is fully aware of the position of matters in this country. I suggest this as I understand Mr. Logan is on the Continent. There are two years' rent now due for Dolphington, but if I had been dealt with according to the practice on the estate of the Earl of Wemyss and many other landlords, there would now have been *no arrears*. If a re-arrangement had been made similar to what has been done under the Irish Land Act they would be so reduced that they could be paid almost at once, and I rather think that if I had been dealt with in the same way as Mr. Guild, another tenant on the same estate, there would be no arrears, or at any rate they would be so small in amount that they could be paid immediately.

I had a meeting with Lord Rosebery, in November, 1882, at his office in Parliament-square, Edinburgh, when he was Secretary of State, at which he admitted that I had proved that the land in this district had been valued and let generally 50 per cent. above the fair rent. This corresponds with the reduction given by many landlords, as well as the reductions under the Irish Land Act, and I sent an account to Messrs. Mackenzie, Innes, and Logan on 13th April last, showing that, taking Lord Rosebery's admission as a basis of calculation, I had paid them before Whit Sunday, 1885, £277 more than the fair rent stating at the same time that I hoped they would be content

with the *fair* rent in such calamitous seasons, and allow the over-rent to lie over in the meantime. I did not ask them to relieve me of the responsibility for the over-rent, being quite willing to pay it, if I am able to do so, when more favourable seasons have come round again, and I understood that they had acquiesced in this arrangement in the meantime. I also stated that I was willing to show all my books, so that they would know what I was doing with the money I got for the crops, and that I would be glad to consult them about the cropping or management of the farm. I cannot see what more I could have done to show my earnest desire to pay the *full* rent, till such time as a new arrangement could be made. I also made a very important explanation to them why, for one year, there would be some delay in the rent paying—viz., Before my entry to Dolphingston, and for some years afterwards, I gave no bills for manures, &c., as the great majority of farmers have been in the habit of doing. To be ready with the rent for the landlords I gave bills for a year or two, to the merchants who supplied manures to be sown in spring, paying them as the crop was sold in autumn. Owing to the heavy arrears hanging over me last year I paid all manures in cash, as the landlord's agents might have seen it their duty to come down on me for the arrears, in which case the merchants would have lost their money, and I felt that the trustees would not wish the merchants to lose the money for manures sown on their farm. The money, which for a year or two previous to last year would have been paid as rent now, has *this* year been paid to the merchants who supplied the manures sown last spring, but then as it does not require to be paid in the autumn as in previous years there will be all that amount more to pay to the landlords this autumn, as the crop is disposed of. This is a very important matter in explanation of the large arrears, which the agents seem entirely to overlook. I pay all accounts at the end of each month at present, so that I have no other debts except the arrears of rent, which, after all, considering the large rent, are not so very formidable. I should state, also, that I have put into Dolphingston farm, within the last few years, a very large amount of manure from Edinburgh. To show your Grace how I am bringing up the fertility of the farm, even in these bad times, when most tenants are impoverishing their farms, I had 68 bushels of wheat per Scots acre in one field, which I had got into full condition, while on the other fields, not yet got into the same condition, there were only 48 bushels per Scots acre, and on the same field this year there is probably the best crop of hay in the district. To stop one while improving the farm to such an extent, even in these disastrous times, is the most short-sighted and suicidal policy for the landlord's interest that can possibly be imagined, and I do not believe the agents understand this, although I told them about the great improvement in the crops which I was making, and which can be seen from my books. If they let the farm now to some one else they may get a good rent for a year or two, as they did for St. Clement's Wells farm adjoining, which was let at the same time as Dolphingston, in 1878, but then in a few years, if it come to be let again, it will be found that the condition has been taken out of it, and it will have to be let at a low rent. This was the case with St. Clement's Wells, which had been pastured by the late St. George G. Suttie, and was in much better condition when let in 1878 than it is in now, even after the trustees have been improving the condition since the tenant gave it up, which I rather think will be found when the offers come in. I wish to call your especial attention to the fact that, trusting to the honour of the proprietor, I kept pouring in manure to the farm, whereas had I done as most farmers do in similar circumstances,

I would have tried to impoverish the farm, so that I might get it re-valued at a lower rent, or had it in such condition that no one would have taken it. The agents are making a great mistake in taking advantage of the confidence which I have placed in them, and trying to come down on me, so as to confiscate, as it is generally called, the condition which I have put into the farm. If all, or many landlords had acted in this way, there would have been an end to letting of farms long ago. The practice of all honourable landlords has been to return the confidence, which a tenant who has improved his farm as I have done Dolphingston, has thereby shown he places in the owner of his farm, and to be reasonable, giving the tenant time till the money put into the land in the shape of manure of a permanent nature would return in the shape of finer crops, enabling the tenant to pass through bad seasons with less difficulty. I now regret that I did not write to your Grace sooner, as I am sure you will understand the practice on large estates in England as well as Scotland. If many landlords had acted to their tenants as the agents for Dolphingston propose to do, there would have been very little land now in cultivation over the east half of Britain. The sum given in abatements of rent since I entered Dolphingston on the estates of such landlords as the Earl of Wemyss, the Duke of Buccleuch, the Duke of Bedford, the Duke of Leinster, &c., is very large indeed, and I do hope you will explain this to the agents, and get them to be more reasonable. It was generally reported, for instance, some years ago, that such a wealthy tenant-farmer as Mr. Clay, who contested the county of Northumberland, had got thousands of pounds of arrears wiped off, and I believe Mr. Guild, another wealthy tenant on the estate of Preston Grange has got very large abatements. It seems to be most cruel to single out a humble tenant-farmer like myself, and departing from the usual custom of landlords, turn me out of my home at an advanced age, and appropriate all my capital. As I intend to leave the country if I am again evicted, you just banish me for being too honest and farming well. I have the more hope of your giving a favourable consideration to this application, that I know you took part in the struggle which the tenant-farmers made in this county for a reform of the land laws which, after nearly destroying the tenant-farmer class from being overstrained by land agents, are now the cause of so much land going out of cultivation, and landlords in very many cases having their incomes very much reduced. I was one of those who supported the late Mr. George Hope, and had the high honour of being "hurled into the trenches" with him, as his opponent expressed it. The men who took part in Mr. Hope's contest twenty years ago are now almost all "cleared out of the county," as a London paper has put it. One of them, in a different part of the county, said to me a few weeks ago that he was now the only one left in the district, the others having been mostly "shot down." There is too much truth in this, as the landlords whom we opposed, though the movement was for their great advantage ultimately, have refused to renew the leases of many of them. I suffered terribly for the part I took against Lord Wemyss politically, which is the cause of my having less capital than I should have had, to carry me through the disastrous seasons, though I had ample capital when I took Dolphingston farm. The farm from which I was evicted in 1869, on the estate of Mr. Bourke, of Coalston, was let at a rise of 50 per cent. in consequence of the improvement I had made on it, but the new tenant soon took out all the condition which I had put into it, and left it unlettable, and it is now worth nothing to the owner.

I think it right to tell you that my only brother, who occupied a farm near Edinburgh, was evicted in 1879, and three voters on the Tory side got in his place from the one farm. He was evicted, entirely as I believe, because

he had voted for the Liberal candidate in 1868. He and his father had been in the farm for 38 years. The rent was £1,800 a year, and always punctually paid, no abatements ever being asked. He felt it so much to be driven from his old home that he got depressed in spirits, and had to be placed in an asylum about two years ago, which was a great shock to me.

Noblemen like yourself have no idea, I believe, how farmers have suffered for many years past, especially in this county, from the over-rent imposed under shelter of the law of Hypothec, by short-sighted and over-zealous land agents. Our class, in fact, has been destroyed. I send copies of letters from my doctor and myself to the agents for Greendykes farm. I believe you will have had forwarded to you by Messrs. Mackenzie, Innes, and Logan, a copy of a letter from my doctor written to them on 3rd inst., in which he states that to proceed with a sequestration will *certainly* bring a *fearful calamity* on me. My letter of April last, of which I enclose printed copy taken in conjunction with a speech of Lord Elcho, and a speech of his agent, of which I send printed extract, reveals a fearful state of matters in this county, nothing less indeed than the destruction of the tenant-farmer class in this county, and it may be said over a great part of Scotland, the destruction of the men of whom Mr. Bright wrote forty years ago, that they were "foremost in the knowledge and practice of their ancient and honourable industry," and who helped, more than any others, to make Scotch agriculture the admiration of the world, as the present Lord Wemyss told me it was in 1865. Mr. Forster said publicly at Bradford, on the 1st of this month, that the assassination of Lord Frederick Cavendish and Mr. Burke *saved Ireland*. This is surely a *most extraordinary statement*, for it means that the destruction of the best and most honest of the Scotch farmers can only be put a stop to by assassination. Mr. Asher, the late Solicitor-General, said that the policy of letting things right themselves, as is being done with the Scotch tenant-farmers, is a very slow and *cruel* policy. My brother's case and my own proves Mr. Asher's statement to be true, and there are very many similar, I have been told. Surely your Grace will put a stop at once to this *monstrous work* which your agents seem determined to carry on in my case, as Dr. Martin, in his letter to your agents of 3rd inst. says he *is certain* that, if they persevere, the result will be a very fearful calamity to me—that is, going into an asylum. They must be very bold or very thoughtless, and surely most heartless, if, after such a warning from Dr. Martin, they go on to incur such a terrible responsibility. What will the public say when it becomes known that two brothers have been driven mad by sheer oppression and high-handed injustice? It is well known that our agriculture could not be surpassed, if equalled, in the Lothians, as will be easily proved by the large amount of rent we have paid without asking any abatements for many years, and the condition we left our farms in. I was told to-day by a person who saw it yesterday, that the farm from which I was evicted in 1869 has now gone back to the most disgraceful state of poverty, the crops being miserable, and the fields filled with docks and thistles. I would be glad to wait on your Grace at any time and place you may appoint, and give any further explanation you may desire.

I am, yours respectfully,

(Signed) JAMES M. RUSSELL.

To His Grace the Duke of Roxburgh, Fleurs Castle, Kelso.

(Copy)

13, Market-street, Haddington, 27th August, 1885.

James M. Russell, Esq., Greendykes.

Dear Sir,—Mr. Conquer, who delivers this, will officially serve you

with certain papers relative to the appointment of a manager under the sequestrations. You will observe that Mr. Elliot is suggested for the post, and I advise you not to oppose his appointment. He will be instructed to make the most of everything in the interest of all concerned.

I understand that you desire an interview with me. I shall be glad to meet you, but have written Messrs. Kirkwood, Bannatyne & Co. pretty fully, and would like to hear from them in the first instance.

I would only here embrace the opportunity of reminding you that *you are in the power of your landlords, not them in yours*; and in my opinion therefore you ought at once and unreservedly to place yourself in their hands.

Bear in mind too that mercy sentiment will not avail you much, if anything. Stern facts only have to be faced, and that with due composure and reliance.*

With best wishes, I am yours very faithfully,

(Signed)

ANDREW WOOD.

The Right Hon. the Earl of Wemyss.

September 16th, 1885.

My Lord,—You are, I believe, acquainted with Mr. James M. Russell, of Greendykes, and I have no doubt that, in common with all who know that gentleman, you will be prepared to testify to his intelligence and his integrity as well as to his skill and success as a farmer. Doubtless you are aware that proceedings of a very extreme and cruel character have been commenced against Mr. Russell by the agents of his landlord. And probably, also, you know that great indignation has been excited throughout East Lothian, and in many other parts of the country, by the treatment that has been dealt out to Mr. Russell.

My object in writing to your lordship is to urge that, if you have any influence with Mr. A. H. Tennent, the owner of Greendykes, or with Dr. Kirkwood, of Glasgow, his agent, you should at once use that influence in order to induce them to stay their hand and not proceed to extremities with Mr. Russell. I have reason to believe that you hold the conviction that the position of Scotch landlords is, at the present time, not too secure, and I beg to assure you that their position will become dangerously insecure if Mr. Russell is made a common bankrupt and evicted from his farm. From communications which I receive I am quite convinced that this case may mark the beginning of an agitation which the landlords of Scotland will view with dismay.

Mr. Russell and those similarly situated are largely at the mercy of landlords like yourself, but their cause has now passed into the hands of others who are neither dependent on nor afraid of the power of landlords, and who, at any rate, will carry on this agitation, whatever may be the fate of Mr. Russell and the other farmers who are suffering with him. I am thoroughly acquainted with all the facts of Mr. Russell's special case, and with the cases of many other farmers in East Lothian and other parts of Scotland, and I am taking measures to place these facts in all their naked hideousness before the British public. Whether the whole of these facts are to come out or not at the present time depends to some extent upon the action of Dr. Kirkwood in regard to Mr. Russell.

I beg to enclose an article, one of a series which has appeared in this journal, and your lordship has, doubtless, seen an article written by me in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, which is to be followed by others.

Trusting that your powerful influence may be used at once on behalf of Mr. Russell, and in the cause of justice, I beg to remain,—Yours truly,

(Signed)

GEORGE BROOKS.

* This is the lawyer spirit. Christ might well say, "Woe unto you lawyers." From lawyers, especially the hard Scotch type, "Good Lord deliver us."

(Copy)

145, West George-street, Glasgow, 24th September, 1885.
 Russell—Greendykes.

Dear Sirs,—It was with the very greatest reluctance that we felt constrained to wire you this morning declining to make the appointment sought in your note of yesterday and relative telegram. *Our reason for this unusual course is to be found in the enclosed copy correspondence, which satisfies us that Mr. Russell cannot be trusted to make any proposals, either directly or through his professional advisers; and that he is ever resorting to outsiders, who use alternately coaxing and indignation and threats in order to accomplish his purpose. The enclosed is only a specimen of the letters and newspaper articles which we have received, and which are equally unbecoming whether directed against ourselves or against our client.**

In these circumstances we had resolved, before receiving your letter, to let the law proceedings take their course, and we remain of this opinion, although it pains us exceedingly to refuse any request of yours.

We remain, dear sirs, yours very truly,

(Signed) BANNATYNE, KIRKWOOD, MCJANNET, & FRANCE.
 Messrs. Duncan & Black, Edinburgh.

SCOTCH LANDLORDISM.

To the Editor of the *Haddingtonshire Advertiser*.

Sir,—The case of Mr. J. M. Russell, Greendykes, referred to in your columns of the 19th inst., is a very sad one. At the same time it is instructive. It shows that the aristocracy of the land have not as yet read aright the signs of the times, or had their eyes opened to the fate that is bound to overtake them before long. With rentals based, to the extent of three-fourths, on confiscated tenants' improvements, they still imagine the possibility of continuing the brigandage, for it is nothing less. In the process "law" is their stronghold, and lawyers their tools. On these occasions, so long known to the every-day life of rural and God-fearing Scotland, the word "justice" is never heard. Nor is the Tenth Commandment and its inculcations for a moment listened to. By the "law" the unfortunate tenant is turned out of the farm he had improved by his skill, his industry, and his expended capital and confiscated without scruple, nay, but as a matter of course. By "law" a covetous neighbour or greedy speculator comes into possession of the confiscated property and the fruits of another's toil, to be in his turn confiscated and turned out. Meantime, God-fearing Scotland looks apathetically on. The "Priest" and the "Levite" pass unctuously by on the other side, and the "Good Samaritan" is nowhere in the way!

The contrast presented by "unruly" and "rebel" Ireland to such a state of things in Scotland, the land of the "unco guid," is very striking. The Irish Land League, so charged with crime on your side the Channel, has yet the "charity" to boast of, that it did much to cope with the brigandage referred to. Of course the League has not fulfilled its mission yet, or worked out its destiny while I write. But it has done a great deal in the

* The contents of this letter should be particularly noted, for Dr. Kirkwood here gives his reason for treating Mr. Russell in an unusual way. What is that reason? That Mr. Russell and his friends tried to call attention to his treatment. These cold-blooded lawyers deliberately take steps to ruin a man, and because he does not submit in meekness and silence they make the fire seven times hotter for him. Public opinion will reprobate the conduct of Dr. Kirkwood as contemptibly mean and diabolically cruel. Lawyers have no bowels.

short time which has been at its disposal, and it means to accomplish its work of putting down "felonious" landlordism in the near future. Already under its teaching and action, the whilom rural serf, he who walked abroad, at no distant period of the past with the furtive bearing of the slave, now walks erect and looks boldly his erstwhile tyrant in the face. With the tenant all is changed, the notice to quit no longer falls upon him like the doom of death. He can no longer be evicted from his holding or his improvements confiscated, save for non-payment of rent. And it is a fundamental principle of the Land League, that wherever the tenant has been rack-rented, or, as we say, subjected to an unjust rent, until by the exaction he is impoverished and no longer able to pay his rent, and is consequently evicted from his farm, that farm no man shall bid for or take unless at his peril—the peril of being "boycotted," which means that no man shall buy from him, or sell to him, or work for him, or assist him in any shape or form. To take a farm from which a tenant had been evicted for non-payment of an unjust rent we call land-grabbing, and the taker a land-grabber. We recognise in land-grabbing the back-bone of rack-renting, the mainstay of tenant ruin and confiscation, and the prop of that brigandage upon the producer, which has at last brought agriculture in these kingdoms to the verge of destruction. It is in reliance upon the tendency to land-grabbing that so generally prevails over Scotland, that the proceedings are being taken against Mr. J. M. Russell, as intimated in your columns. If the lords and magnates of Scotch estates had such as the Land League of Ireland to face, and know beforehand that their farms would lie derelict on their hands and unlet on their estates, they would think twice before allowing their lawyers loose, to "legally oust and confiscate the improvements of such a tenant. And, on the other hand, if the covetous neighbour knew beforehand that, if he ventured to hire the evicted from farm, and make himself by the act an accomplice in iniquity, he would be regarded by all around him as a moral leper they were bound to avoid as the plague; he would give that farm a wide berth, as the sailors say, and leave it on the landlord's hands to grow thistles and briars for evermore, for anything he cared to the contrary. Land-grabbing and land-grabbers, in short, have been the bane of Ireland, and a prominent agency in bringing it to its present crisis. They have been equally the bane of Scotland, and instruments in getting up those enormous rents there that are now crushing the producing tenants in the face of the fierce foreign competition that prevails. And until it is recognised by the Scotch farmers, large and small, that it is their duty towards themselves, their dependents, their class, and their country to combine, as we have had to do in Ireland, to stamp out the land-grabber and with him the land monopoly, enjoyed by a class and used by its members as an engine of oppression and plunder of those engaged in producing a nation's food and adding annually to a nation's wealth, the present evil system will continue, and not only continue, but be persisted with until it must bring Scotland, as it has brought Ireland, to the brink of bankruptcy and social disorganisation. In conclusion, let me remind you, that when the late Sir Robert Peel inaugurated the policy of free-trade in regard to foreign agricultural productions, he *virtually abolished foreign agricultural rents*. To put the home agricultural producer therefore on a level with his foreign rival, neither should he have rent to pay. This is the Irish view: I commend it, with your kindly permission, to the earnest consideration of the Scottish tenants.

I am, &c.,

THOMAS ROBERTSON,

Narraghmore, Athy, Ireland, 25th Aug., 1885.

(Copy)

Kensington Chambers, 73, Ludgate Hill, London, September 16th, 1885.
Dr. Anderson Kirkwood.

Dear Sir,—You are, I believe, the agent of Mr. A. H. Tennent, who owns the farm of Greendykes, now occupied by Mr. James M. Russell, who is, I understand, about to be made a bankrupt and evicted.

I write to you in the character of a Christian minister and journalist, and also on the ground that I am thoroughly acquainted with all the facts of this distressing case. My purpose in addressing you is to urge upon you the wisdom of staying your hand and arranging the matter with Mr. Russell on fair and equitable terms; and, further, to warn you that if this is not done I will do my best to bring the whole story before the world in such a way as to make the whole landlord interest of Scotland rue the day when Mr. Russell was made the victim of such rapacity and cruelty. This is no idle threat. I have already begun the work in the columns of this journal and of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and I have letters from men in England and Scotland—men of position and influence—which convince me that this case will mark the beginning of an agitation which will end only with the abolition of Scotch landlordism—at any rate in its present form. Mr. Russell is in your power, but I am not, and my pen and voice and influence will certainly be used against a system which perpetrates such hideous and infamous injustice.

You are, I believe, a Christian man, and a leader of the Free Church in Glasgow, and I understand, further, that your complaint of Mr. Russell is that he has been “too honest.” May I ask on what principle you charge this upon him as a fault, and whether you think it in harmony with Christian principles to punish a man for his integrity? To me it seems a diabolical thing to take advantage of a man’s uprightness in order to ruin him.

You may depend upon it that graver issues are involved in this case than you at present conceive of. The worst enemies of landlordism could wish you nothing better than that you should carry out to the bitter end the proceedings you have commenced against Mr. Russell.—Faithfully yours,

GEORGE BROOKS.

(Copy)

145, West George-street, Glasgow, 17th September, 1885.

Sir,—I am in receipt this morning of your letter, dated the 16th, but as it is apparent from its tenour and tone that you are imperfectly acquainted with the facts, I must decline to correspond with you on the subject.

I am, Sir, your very obedient servant, ANDERSON KIRKWOOD.
Rev. George Brooks, Benha Lodge, West Dulwich, London, S.E.

(Copy)

Benha Lodge, West Dulwich, S.E., September 16th, 1885.

A. H. Tennent, Esq.

Dear Sir,—I take the liberty of writing to you in regard to the case of Mr. James M. Russell, who is a tenant of yours at Greendykes. I do so on the ground that I am a Christian minister and journalist, and as such am interested in public questions, and in the cause of justice; and also because I am thoroughly acquainted with the facts. Mr. Russell’s treatment is, in my opinion, harsh and cruel in the extreme, and I am loth to believe that you are a party to it.

My purpose in writing is to urge you to inquire into the facts for yourself, and not leave the matter entirely to your agents. If you will do this I feel sure that you will at once order the proceedings which are now going forward to be stayed.

Mr. Russell’s treatment is exciting indignation throughout the country

and graver issues are involved in it than you or your agents at present imagine. It is not improbable that it will be the beginning of an agitation which will only end with the entire abolition of the present land system of Scotland.

I, for one, intend to work for this end, and I know that I can rely upon the co-operation of some very powerful men on both sides of the Tweed. I have already begun the work, both in the columns of this paper and of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and I mean to carry it forward. Mr. Russell is in your power, but I am not, and his cause is my cause.

My indignation knows no bounds when I see such a man as this crushed in so ruthless a manner, and I am not alone. A fire is being kindled in Scotland which will work great havoc before it burns itself out.

I warn you most solemnly that if Mr. Russell is made a bankrupt and evicted from his farm, not only you, but the entire landlord interest of Scotland will rue the day it was done. I am faithfully yours,

GEORGE BROOKS.

Mark Lane Express, 21st September, 1885.

Last week a description of the hard case of Mr. James Russell, an East Lothian farmer, was reprinted from the *Christian Commonwealth*, in these columns. At the end of the article appears this sentence:—"The Farmers' Alliance ought also to be able to do something to help a member who is in such circumstances as these; if they cannot or will not do this, it is difficult to see how they are likely to confer much practical benefit upon farmers." It is very cheap and easy to say this; but can the *Christian Commonwealth* suggest any way in which the Alliance can help Mr. Russell? His losses exceed the combined incomes of the English and Scotch Alliances, so that it is to be presumed that my contemporary would not recommend the payment of these losses. There are thousands of farmers who have lost all their capital by having to pay rent without obtaining any profit from farming during the last few years, and the Alliances would need an annual income of several millions of pounds in order to render pecuniary assistance to all deserving farmers. What else can be done for Mr. Russell? Is it for the Alliances to go begging for mercy to landlords? Or would it be of any use to abuse them? Mr. Russell bound himself to pay exorbitant rents for his farms, and his landlords are hard and grinding enough to hold him to his bargains. They are perfectly within their rights, just as Shylock would have been if he could have taken his pound of flesh without drawing blood, and it is not the place of any public body to hold up to execration men who simply insist upon the fulfilment of contracts. The Scottish Alliance proposes that Parliament should interfere to cancel leases; but, if this should be done, it would be too late to help Mr. Russell.

It is quite correctly stated that the high rents agreed to by Mr. Russell were artificially enhanced by the law of Hypothec. It is partly for this reason that the Scottish Alliance considers it has grounds for appealing to Parliament to cancel existing leases where tenants cannot pay their rents, owing to the altered conditions of farming. The principal arguments in favour of this proposal are (1) that the high rents now current are, in great part, rents on tenants' improvements, and therefore of the nature of plunder; and (2) that it is not consistent with the public welfare that nearly all the leaseholders of Scotland—skilled farmers as they are—should be ruined by the continued exaction of rents partly based on confiscation. It would, no doubt, be gratifying to Mr. Russell if the publication of his hard case should help towards the passing of a Scottish Arrears Act, or some similar measure, in relief of his fellow tenants. Similarly it might be consoling to him, and a

deterrent to other landlords than his own, if a meeting was convened to express the general feeling of the public at the harshness with which he appears to have been treated. But nothing except a public subscription on his behalf can benefit Mr. Russell himself, and there are thousands of tenants who need that at least as badly as he does. Everyone must sympathise with him as a skilful farmer and an honourable man who has been ruined, or nearly ruined, by circumstances over which he had no control; but it is quite out of the power of the Farmers' Alliance to afford him any substantial assistance.

There is one point in Mr. Russell's case which should not be lost sight of. He has, I understand, spent large sums of money on improvements, and it will be pure robbery if his landlords appropriate these, or the balance of their value after recovering rent due.

THE CASE OF MR. RUSSELL.

Greendykes, Makmerry, East Lothian, 25th Sept.

Sir,—I have read the remarks on the dispute between my landlord and myself in your paper of the 21st inst. I have not time at present to make a fitter explanation, so I send you a letter which I wrote to a local paper, the *Haddingtonshire Advertiser*, and which I hope you will publish.

There is one sentence in your remarks to which I must allude—viz., "that nothing except a public subscription would benefit me." I wish to state distinctly that I would not accept a public subscription, though it were offered. As you stated in your excellent paper, read at the conference in London on 18th November last, "Thousands of farmers have been ruined, and a vast majority brought to the brink of ruin." Very many of these cases may require a public subscription more than I do.

Even if my landlords, by throwing aside all regard for honesty, succeed in robbing me of every penny I have by putting in force against me old British laws, universally acknowledged to be unjust and dishonest, I am not afraid as to the future.

Like very many of my brother Scotchmen, I very early learned to say, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." I hope I can use these words now, not as a mere form, but as the firm faith of my heart.

I engaged in British agriculture about the time the corn-laws were repealed, trusting that the British nation would deal honestly with me as to legislation. I, as well as the vast majority to whom you refer, have been brought to our present position by no fault of ours, but by the glaring injustice and dishonesty of the British people towards us, for they selected our class for exception from all legislation at the very time when, above all other classes, we required special consideration from our legislators, so that we might have ordinary fair-play in the competition with foreigners to which we had been subjected. To ruin us by most cruel, unjust, and disgraceful laws, and then to offer us charity, would be to add insult to injury.

JAMES M. RUSSELL.

The following is the letter enclosed by Mr. Russell :—

Mr. Russell, Greendykes, and his Landlords—A Vindication.

Greendykes, Makmerry, 1st Sept.

Sir,—As you alluded to the dispute between my landlords and myself in your issue of last week, I hope you will allow me to make an explanation. The difference between us is that the agents for my landlords insist on dealing with me on the commercial system as to rent-paying, while I ask to be dealt with in the same way as the tenants on the estates of the Earl of

Wemyss, Lord Blantyre, the late Lady Ruthven, and many others in this county; in fact, according to the common custom of the county, and as the tenant-farmers have been dealt with universally, I may say, all over England and Ireland as well as Scotland. Excellent examples have been set and made public as to fair-dealing with tenant-farmers by such noblemen as the Duke of Bedford in England, and the Duke of Leinster in Ireland.

The Scottish Chamber of Agriculture issued an address to landowners and others in December last, in which they say: "The consequence is inevitable that, if the present rents are to be exacted, all the current leaseholders in the country, who live exclusively by farming, must be roused out and ruined in the immediate future." So that I am in no worse position than all current leaseholders who live exclusively by farming, if any value is to be attached to the manifesto of the Scottish Chamber of Agriculture.

The present position of so many tenants in Britain has been brought about by the fact that, after emancipating the slaves in the West Indies and repealing the corn-laws, the British people suddenly stopped in their career of beneficent, or, rather, just legislation, and selected for exemption from all legislation of a favourable nature, their tenant-farmers at the very time when that class, having been subjected to a most fierce competition with the cultivators of other countries, ought in common justice to have been treated with more consideration than any other class. Having let in on us a perfect flood of foreign produce, which could not fail to end in ruin to British agriculture if the old rent-raising laws were allowed to remain, the nation, in place of going on to relieve us, and thus continuing in the career of just legislation begun by emancipating the West Indian slaves and repealing the corn-laws, so as to give us ordinary fair-play and a chance of successfully competing with the foreigner, stopped short with such legislation and practically said to us: Now, for you our laws are as the laws of the Medes and Persians, which alter not.

Landlords all over Britain have acted in a spirit of kindness and consideration towards their tenants and relieved them of the over-rent at which all land had to be taken in Britain on account of the rent-raising laws of Hypothec and distress. The only reason as yet given by the agents for departing from the long-established and universal custom of landlords in my case is that I am paying everybody but the landlords. I believe I acted honestly in this, because no other parties with whom I have transactions had a special and unjust law in their favour which enabled them to exact from me 50 per cent. above the fair value of the articles I bought from them, and I have therefore got their goods at work at a fair price; whereas I was compelled, as I had remained in Britain trusting to the honour of the nation that I would get just legislation and fair-play, to pay 50 per cent. more than the fair rent of the land which I took to cultivate. The Earl of Rosebery admitted to me at an interview in 1882 that it had been the practice to value and let land in this district 50 per cent. above the fair rent. If all landlords had acted as the agents for my farms are now doing, there would have been no tenant-farmers left on immense tracts of excellent land on the east half of Britain, where the foreign competition and disastrous seasons have been most severely felt.

Mr. Forster said at Bradford on the 1st of August, that the terrible murders of Lord Frederick Cavendish and Mr. Burke saved Ireland. This saying of Mr. Forster's is surely a very remarkable one, and calls for some explanation. If Scotland is only to be saved by such means, then it would appear, that the "inevitable consequence" predicted by the Chamber of Agriculture is certain. Has it come to this in Britain, that justice is only given to a

suffering class when "terrible murders" have been committed—for that is what Mr. Forster has practically told us.

The eviction of my brother in Midlothian (with a very lamentable result) for no fault but being too honest and farming too well up to the end of his lease, has made me anxious to leave Britain for some years past, and I hope my landlords will take into account the confidence I have placed in them by keeping my farms up till now in the very highest condition, not impoverishing them so as to make a new arrangement at a low rent as is generally done, and so allow me to take as much capital as possible away with me. Of course I am extremely sorry now that I engaged in British agriculture, but I had no idea that tenant-farmers were to receive such exceptional treatment from the nation.

It will be interesting to see whether a nation which selects one class of its citizens to be treated with the greatest injustice resulting in the inevitable destruction of that class will do so with impunity. It has not been so in past history, but the British nation may have had good reason for destroying its agriculturists, and thus escape the punishment which would otherwise have come upon it.

Mark Lane Express, 28th Sept.

JAMES M. RUSSELL.

THE CRISIS IN SCOTTISH AGRICULTURE.

*To the Editor of the PALL MALL GAZETTE.**

Sir,—I have just read Mr. Brooks' article on "The Crisis in Scottish Agriculture," as contained in the *Pall Mall Budget*, of 24th September, and from a pretty accurate knowledge of some of the cases referred to, can thoroughly endorse the conclusions arrived at by that gentleman. The farmers of East Lothian and the public generally, owe Mr. Brooks a debt of thanks for the light he has let in upon the state of agriculture in that county. As he truly says, the subject "is far more vital at the present time, than either Disestablishment or Free Education."

But there is one point in Mr. Brooks' able article to which I cannot help taking exception, and that is where he refers to "political spite" as being one of the chief causes of the crisis. In support of this view he quotes Mr. Chamberlain's recent speech at Glasgow, where he is reported to have said he had "received within the last few weeks many names with particulars attached, of cases in which Nonconforming tenants have been evicted or unfairly treated in Scotland as in England, because their opinions differ from those of their landlords."

The case to which he gives most prominence in support of this charge, is that of Mr. Russell, of Greendykes, and he leads us to infer that Mr. Russell is the victim of "political spite," on account of his being a Nonconformist and a Liberal. With all that Mr. Brooks says as to Mr. Russell's eminent skill and integrity, and his high character and independence, I am most thoroughly in accord. Mr. Brooks says he is reputed to be the best farmer in East Lothian. I would even go farther, in saying that Mr. Russell is not surpassed as a farmer in the United Kingdom. His crops this year have been as an oasis in the wilderness, to which much of East Lothian is being reduced. On one field of wheat his out-turn is estimated at nine quarters per Scotch acre, or over 57 bushels to the imperial acre, and when it is remembered that the average return over England is 30 bushels per acre, I leave your readers to understand what that implies. His experimental farm of some four acres, with its 30 or 40 accurately measured and manured plot

* Sent to *Pall Mall Gazette*, but not inserted.

of as many different kinds of potatoes, for the purpose of discovering a substitute for the old "Regent," so fast disappearing from the inroads of disease, would rejoice the hearts of the Directors of the Highland and Agricultural Society.

Most agents and landlords would delight to do honour to such a man, and to have him on their property at any cost as an example of, to say the very least, untiring perseverance and industry. I am perfectly certain that had Lord Wemyss or Lord Haddington, or many other landlords whom I could name, had such a man on their estates, they would have treated him with sympathy and kindness in the hard times that farmers have had to cope with.

But, unfortunately, Mr. Russell on one of his farms is under a Non-conformist agent, a man who, if I mistake not, is looked upon as a bright and shining light in one of the Scotch Dissenting communities. His landlord, a young man, and living most part of the year abroad, if not a Liberal himself, is at least connected with a family who are well-known for their Liberal tendencies. The farm when Mr. Russell entered on his lease belonged to a respectable Conservative proprietor, and was managed by an agent who was also a Conservative, and I venture to say, had those gentlemen been connected with the property now, the tenant would have received very different treatment. The second of Mr. Russell's farms, the landlord being a minor, is under the care of trustees. One of these is a Whig nobleman whose family has long been identified with the Liberal cause, and the law agents who manage the trust are also Liberals. So much for the charge of "political spite."^o

No! It is not "political spite" that is at fault, in this instance, at least. My idea is that Mr. Russell is a man of too independent of turn a mind to be longer endured. He has dared to make known what are the grievances under which he thinks farmers suffer, and he is therefore a man to be crushed. What matter if he, like the honourable man he is, has paid as long as he is able every farthing of a crushing rent—acknowledged to be from 30 to 50 per cent. too dear, but given when Hypothec was in full force—and this in the face of bad harvests and low prices, and while farmers on all sides of him were getting reductions. He is a man to be put down, from whom the pound of flesh must be exacted.

What are our legislators or would-be legislators doing to remedy this state of matters? Literally nothing. An Edinburgh advocate is now stumping East Lothian by way of appealing to the Liberals to return him in opposition to Lord Elcho, the present member. East Lothian is pre-eminently an agricultural county, if it is anything, and yet, will it be believed, this young aspirant for Parliamentary fame never once alludes to the subject, but contents himself with inflicting upon his hearers the stale and nauseating adulation of Mr. Gladstone and all his works, and holding up to reprobation the "rotten policy" of the Tories. Shame to the farmers and labourers of East Lothian, if they return such. Better a thousand times that they should re-elect Lord Elcho, who, as a practical agriculturist, knows their wants and is ready to help them.

I am, &c.,

26th September, 1885.

ONE WHO KNOWS.

A BERKSHIRE FARMER AND THE LAND LAWS.

A Berkshire Farmer sends us a copy of *The Christian Commonwealth*, which contain details of what he not inaptly designates "A gross case of landlordism." The article is headed "Scotch Evictions," and the writer having remarked that Scotch agriculture, owing to bad land laws and bad

* This writer ignores the fact that Whig-Liberals and Tories are virtually one on the Land question.

landlords, is in a very serious condition, in proof of which several illustrative cases, all founded on fact, have been given, proceeds to detail the case of Mr. James Russell, who farms 900 acres in East Lothian, and whom he describes as one of the most if not the most skilful and successful farmer in that county. Mr. Russell has two farms (separately owned), both held on a 19 years' lease; in one case 13 years has expired, and in the other seven years. The farms were taken when the law of Hypothec was in existence, a law which had the effect of sending up rents to at least one-third beyond the fair value of the land; and though this evil law has been abolished, those leases which came into existence previous to its abolition are practically still as much under it as they were before. For one of his farms Mr. Russell pays £3 12s. per acre and for the other £3 15s., and these rents he paid fully up to and including the year 1882. In 1877, the notorious fatal year to agriculturists, Mr. Russell sunk £3,000 capital in one farm, and yet asked for no abatement of rent, but as farmers all round were getting reductions in 1882, he asked for a rebate, but he was refused in the case of each farm. He paid what rent he could, and allowed considerable arrears to accumulate, in the hope of getting a permanent reduction in rent, negotiations to this end being carried on for many months. In the case of one farm Mr. Russell offered to pay £2,000 to avoid sequestration, on the ground that the rent should be reduced in future, but this was refused; in the other case he made no offer as the landlord was enormously wealthy, besides which Mr. Russell estimated that he had paid during the lease £4,800 more than the fair rent. In December, 1884, the landlord's agent sent a valuer over the farm, with a view to effect a settlement, and in his report he frankly admitted that the landlord had received £4,800 more than he ought to have done. A marked friendliness was then shown by the agent to Mr. Russell, who was led to hope that the arrears would be wiped off, but three or four days afterwards Mr. Russell was summoned to Edinburgh, and was told that it had been decided to sequester him, no reason being assigned except that the agents of the other farm wished to do so. "Mr. Russell," the writer continues, "has a threat of eviction hanging over his head, and it is quite possible that he may find himself in a few months homeless and almost penniless. The whole story is as discreditable to the landlord as it is honourable to Mr. Russell; the whole country side is astir with excitement and indignation, and there are numerous portents that a terrible crisis is impending."

Our correspondent, who, we may say, lives in the Newbury district, says:—"Having myself experienced similar ill-treatment, I can deeply sympathise with Mr. Russell. No doubt the Scotch farmers are suffering greatly from the boasted lease system, but which has now completely broken down. I have never been partial to leases, as I consider twenty-one years much too long to bind a tenant without any release from his covenant; and, again, his family may suffer if he dies, the tenant's death ending the lease. Lord Tollemache's system is a vast improvement, but we want and *will have* a legal recognition of rights as cultivators. We don't want permission to exist and work upon the land by one man's will. Old tenants in England as well as in Scotland are being miserably fleeced. If such an one's holding is at all decent or lettable no real adjustment of rent is permitted, and the case is staved off by a percentage returned. I should like to see a return of say 100 re-lettings in Berks, and compare the new rents so gained with 100 farms side by side with them in old tenant's hands. The landlords know that old tenants suffer loss by changing, and mulcts them accordingly. Some plod on doing but little good, others become bankrupts, robbing traders, not the landlord, by the law of distress, whilst others commence rooking and deteriorating their

farms, or they throw them up. The British public chime in, wonder at the decay and depression in agriculture, and a landlord Parliament in its great wisdom examines the patient by commission, but takes good care not to deal with the real state of disease. Mr. Russell's case and hundreds of others up and down our land demand justice being done; and that no longer shall encouragement be afforded by law to such a class to rob tenants. Encouragement to landlords forsooth! Why, only four miles from Newbury Lord Wantage permits land to grow weeds wholesale, allows valuable land close by the Didcot railway to go uncultivated, and the homestead to become most ruinous and woe-begone. To the south of Newbury Lord Carnarvon is obliged to mow and burn the crop to prevent a farm lately cultivated by a tenant from returning to a state of weeds and wilderness. Encourage such men to play 'the dog in the manger!' No, indeed. Mr. Arch is right in saying that he would fine and punish them for their standing in the way of the nation's prosperity. To conclude, I calmly say that landlordism as at present wielded in England, is a burden and disgrace to our laws. I have my ideas as to remedies, and they are not destructive. I would free the land to the utmost extent, aye, even to disestablishment. I would put no hindrance to the formation of small properties in land, and I go with Mr. Chamberlain in his proposals for obtaining land through the local authority. But do not let us lose sight of the present 'beast of burden' to farm tenants as they now exist, and are likely to exist for many a year to come. Let us do justly by those who have and are now bearing the heat and burden of the day. Give them encouragement to use their utmost skill and ability in their calling, and take care they or their families shall be compensated, not rack-rented upon the same, and the outlay which they may think fitting to expend upon their lands."

The Reading Observer, Sept. 19, 1885.

MR. RUSSELL, GREENDYKES, AND HIS LANDLORDS.

Mr. Russell, Greendykes, has sent the following letter to the Marquis of Tweeddale;—

Greendykes, Makmerry, East Lothian, 3rd October, 1885.

Marquis of Tweeddale.

My Lord,—I wrote you on 29th August, 1883, and again on 22nd October, 1883. I was at much pains in laying before you in these letters the very great sufferings of many tenant-farmers in this county who had supported the political party of which Mr. Gladstone is the head; and particularly called your attention to the case of Mr. Aitken, who had to leave the farm of Sunnyside after paying a great amount of over-rent, and having removed from Sunnyside to the farm of Markle, had to retire from farming with the loss, as I suppose, of all his capital.

I also brought before you the case of my brother, who was evicted from the farm of Saughton Hall Mains, in Midlothian, entirely, as I believe, because he voted for Mr. Gladstone's party at parliamentary elections, and particularly for voting in favour of your lordship at the election of 1868, when his landlord, Sir James Gardiner Baird, urged him very much not to vote for the disestablishment of the Irish Church. I stated to you what a terrible calamity had come over my brother—and I may say on myself—in consequence of his eviction, and that he had been placed in a lunatic asylum. I was exceedingly anxious that you would cause an inquiry to be made into the sufferings of the farmers who had supported your party, as I felt sure that if the matter had been brought before the British nation some relief and reparation would have been made to the sufferers on account of the great and

cruel wrong which had been done them. After you declined to help us, I continued to use every means in my power to get light let in on the terrible sufferings of many of the very best tenant-farmers, and most tried and faithful supporters of Liberalism, and especially to those who had conscientiously taken the side of disestablishment. I cannot in this letter give you the names of all to whom I wrote, or with whom I had interviews. I lost no opportunity of writing to any newspapers when I saw there was a probability of the public paying any attention to the subject. Nearly two years after I first wrote to you I met a London journalist, the Rev. George Brooks, who took much interest in the matter, and wrote three articles on it in the *Christian Commonwealth*, and is now writing three articles in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. I sent to you copies of the *Christian Commonwealth*, containing the articles, but in case you have overlooked them I enclose them cut out of the papers. I hope they will soon be published in another form. As no relief has yet been given to those whose sufferings I brought before you, much additional suffering has been endured, and unless some relief is given speedily much greater suffering must be endured in the near future. I intimated to you in my letter of 29th August, 1883, that I could only go on by the forbearance of the proprietors of the land I farm; and on the 1st of August last the agents for my landlords intimated to me that they could not allow me to go on any longer, and they are now taking legal proceedings to have me evicted in a few weeks. As I have been farming on the only system by which agriculture can exist in Britain, that is, by a good understanding being maintained between landlord and tenant, and mutual confidence existing, I have my farms in the highest state of fertility.

On one farm—Dolphingston, on the estate of Prestongrange—I have expended much capital during the last seven years, believing that I would be treated in the same way as other farmers, and that if I did not get any encouragement from the landlords to farm well they would at any rate not take a mean advantage of the confidence I placed in them, and therefore I put a large amount of capital in their land, as in these times of low prices there is no chance of carrying on except by growing large crops.

I have accordingly brought that farm to such a state of fertility that in one field last year I had 68 bushels of wheat per Scots acre, and this year on one field I have about 76 bushels of barley per Scots acre. These crops are at least one-third above the average yield even on good land, and my other crops this year are in a similar proportion above the average. You are well aware that it is an old-established maxim in agriculture that there must be mutual confidence between landlord and tenant, and that during the last ten years enormous sums have been given as abatements by landlords to tenants, and farms have been re-valued all over Britain. It has been stated over and over again publicly, that there was no need of applying the same legislation to England and Scotland as had been given to Ireland, because the landlords and tenants were reasonable, that a good understanding existed between them, and they could rearrange their rents without State interference. All acknowledged that a crisis in agriculture had occurred when rearrangement was necessary, and in confirmation of this, with a class of unreasonable tenants in Ireland, the State interfered. In my case, however, the landlords and their agents have departed from their old-established custom of landlords all over Britain, completely ignoring the universally acknowledged crisis, and insist on stopping my agricultural operations just at the most critical juncture and the most unfavourable time for selling of my whole stock, and turning me out of my home, and confiscating all my capital, so that I will have to leave East Lothian without a penny.

I find that if I had been treated as some farmers who came into the country have been treated who supported Lord Wemyss, I would have had at least £30,000, instead of going away without any capital. You may think this an extraordinary statement, but I will prove it to the satisfaction of such an agriculturist as Mr. James Howard, M.P., for Bedfordshire. I will not go farther into details at present, but I assure you that this is a very moderate estimate of what my support of Liberalism has cost me. Now I ask you, why are my brother and I destroyed and driven from agriculture at the very time when British land is going out of cultivation by tens of thousands of acres!

The enormous amount of rents we have paid as compared with our neighbours proves the superiority of our agriculture, and you cannot find fault with our characters as men of integrity and uprightness. I would earnestly ask your lordship to give me an opportunity of conversation with you as soon as possible. In such a crisis it is a work of mercy as well as of necessity to attend to such business even on the Sabbath Day, and if you wished it, I would meet with you on Sabbath first, or any other day you may find convenient. I would like to see you in presence of one or two friends, for I can scarcely keep cool under such extraordinary circumstances. My father steadily supported the Liberal party in Midlothian, and trained his two sons to do the same. Now we are both destroyed for no fault of our own, but entirely owing to unjust British laws, which, as I pointed out to you in my letters in 1883, made it impossible for any farmer to succeed who farmed well. I have no hesitation in stating that if the proceedings against me are allowed to go on, the most extraordinary appropriation, or confiscation, of tenant's improvements, in the annals of British agriculture, will take place.

I estimate the capital of my two farms at not less than £15,000, and I am told that if proceedings are not stopped this will be all either taken possession of by the landlords or squandered among lawyers.

The late Lord Clarendon said it was felonious to appropriate a tenant's improvements without paying for them, and the Marquis of Salisbury almost goes as far, as in a speech by the latter, reported in the *Daily News* of 10th of December, 1879, he says:—"Now, there is no doubt that a tenant ought to have, if he leaves his farm, full compensation for unexhausted improvements. I do not fancy that anyone will differ as to that point. I speak in the presence of my noble friend (the Earl of Clarendon), whose father employed the word 'felonious' to those who have acted on different principles. It was a celebrated speech in which he made use of it, and without going to the extent of that adjective, I admit the principle as one of very great importance, and one which ought to be sacredly maintained."

I do not know what language Lord Clarendon or Lord Salisbury would use to characterise the present proceedings against me, but if they are carried out I will be able to say on oath, without the slightest hesitation, that the language of Professor Thorold Rogers, in an article published in the *Daily News*, of 10th January, 1885, is not strong enough to describe the treatment which I have received in East Lothian. He says:—"In old days freebooters levied black mail on the farmers. They stipulated that if the farmer paid a part of his profits to them they would protect him against other marauders. The law put the system down, and very rightly. The process by which the landowners have cleaned the farmer out of his capital is like the way in which the freebooters treated him, with this difference, that they have done him no service in return. They have demanded his vote, cut his land up with their horses and dogs, and devoured his crops with their game; and,

finally, have ruined him with their exactions. At the same time they have plundered and beggared the labourer, crowded the towns and destroyed the home trade. A man must have a very grim sense of humour if he finds any consolation in the fact that they have ruined themselves, and that millions of mortgaged acres are, at the present moment, not worth foreclosing."

I have often been told that I am too honest; and one of my neighbour farmers not very long ago said that, in a conversation among some farmers who knew me well, he had heard me spoken of as "Quixotically honest." Now, writing most seriously, I state that if I were put on oath I would say distinctly that the words of Professor Thorold Rogers in the above quotation are not at all exaggerated; but, on the contrary, do not describe in sufficiently strong terms the conduct towards me of my landlords' agents. I have a great respect for many landlords—indeed, as a class, I believe they are not worse, and perhaps they are in some respects better than other classes; but I believe in many cases they injure their tenants' and their own characters, as well as the characters of their class, by leaving the management of their business in the hands of men without sufficient knowledge of agriculture. This is particularly the case, as I have found by experience with men who have made money in business and purchased land and refused to manage their estates according to the usual practice of landlords. This is the case, I believe, of my landlords at present, and was to a great extent in Coalston Mains. I will be compelled in vindication of my own character, and with the view of getting restoration or restitution of my confiscated capital, to make as public as possible the whole circumstances connected with my eviction, and I hope you will grant me an interview, so that, if possible, some way may be devised of putting a stop to the recent proceedings.

I am sure your lordship will agree with me that this is not a time for landlords' agents to act in such a way as I have described, and that their conduct when made fully public, as it must be, if persisted in, is calculated to excite a very strong prejudice against landlords as a class, when those engaged in agriculture know very well that the great majority of landlords have dealt very kindly, and in many cases generously, with their tenants.

While I have brought before you my own case chiefly at this time, there are a great number of cases nearly as bad, and perhaps many far worse, and at present the prospect is very much worse than ever, for the crop of the year is not likely to be a profitable one. There are various ways by which some relief could be given, and it seems most extraordinary that the British Parliament should relieve and retain the troublesome Irish farmers, but ruin and banish the peaceful Scotch farmers. I never heard that Irish agriculture was so very superior to Scotch that it was right to do so much for Irish farmers, while the Scotch were roused out and banished with confiscation of all their capital.

Mr. Forster said, at Bradford, on the 1st of August last, that two terrible murders saved Ireland. Are the Scotch farmers to be robbed, ruined, and banished because they will not commit murder? That is just what Mr. Forster has practically told us.

Mr. Bright, in an address to the tenant-farmers of Britain, dated Sept. 3, 1846, alluded to the tenant-farmers of East Lothian as "foremost in the knowledge and practice of their ancient and honourable occupation." Mr. James Howard, at a more recent date, spoke of the "splendid agriculture of East Lothian" as being well worthy of a visit from young English farmers. The men of whom Mr. Bright so spoke, and who raised the agriculture of East Lothian to the position it held when Mr. Howard so characterised it, are now almost entirely driven from the county as well as their sons. The

destruction of such a class, and the extinction of their race in very many cases is not a matter to be lightly passed over; and I think it is the duty of every true friend of the ancient and honourable occupation of agriculture to ask why has this race of men been destroyed.

I hear that Mr. Goschen is to be in Haddington soon. He, more than any public man who has yet spoken on the subject, is alive to the importance of agriculture to the nation, as in an address at Manchester a few months ago he spoke of it as a vast industry, so vast that the profits were one hundred and forty millions a year; whereas the profits from the iron ore industry were only three millions a year, and that therefore any blow falling on such an industry had a most depressing effect on all the other industries of the country. What, then, must be the effect of its entire destruction over whole counties? and in this county its destruction may be said to be fully accomplished.

I wrote to Mr. Goschen, after I heard he was to be in the county, letting him know of the ruined state of agriculture, and asking him to make inquiry into its causes before he left Scotland. I see by to-day's paper that you are to be the chairman of the meeting in Haddington where he is to give an address, and I strongly urge you not to allow such an eminent authority as Mr. Goschen to leave the county without having a conference on such a most important matter.

I am, yours faithfully,

JAMES M. RUSSELL.

SEQUESTRATION OF MR. RUSSELL, GREENDYKES.

In the Haddington Bankruptcy Court, on Monday, before Sheriff Shirreff, application was made at the instance of Mr. Archibald Hay Tennent, of St. Germain's, for sequestration on the estate of Mr. Russell, farmer, Greendykes. Mr. A. Wood, solicitor, appeared for the petitioner; Mr. G. Rattray, solicitor for Mr. Russell; and Mr. T. W. Todrick, solicitor, for the curators of Sir George Grant Suttie (minor).

Mr. Rattray, on behalf of Mr. Russell, asked that decree be not awarded in the meantime, on the ground that a judicial tender had been made to the only two creditors—Mr. Tennent and Sir George Grant Suttie. The curators of Sir George Grant Suttie were satisfied with the offer, and he was in hopes that the agents of Mr. Tennent would also accept it. The judicial offer was as follows:—

"(1) To renounce the current lease of the farm of Greendykes at Martinmas ensuing, 1885; to give up possession of any land when crop was removed; to remove at the term himself and his whole servants therefrom; (2) to pay to the petitioner, as proprietor of Greendykes and landlord under his lease, the sum of £920 in full of rents for crops previous to current crop 1885; (3) to pay the full rent of the current crop 1885; (4) to grant an assignation to the crop and farm stocking to the judicial manager, or any other nominee of the petitioner, in security, and to realise as much as may be needful to cover the foregoing payments, the expenses of the realisation, and the expenses of the processes incurred or to be incurred."

Continuing, Mr. Rattray said the facts were that negotiations had been going on for several years between Mr. Russell's agent and the agents of Mr. Tennent. The reason that no arrangement had been come to was because Dr. Kirkwood, who acted for the petitioner, wished to wait till Mr. Tennent came of age. When Mr. Tennent came of age, negotiations were resumed, and were on the point of settlement when unfortunately some letters appeared in the public prints which had displeased Dr. Kirkwood, and the

negotiations were broken off.* Proceedings were then taken, and a petition for sequestration presented and an action raised for payment of arrears of rent. After the petition was presented, some endeavours were made to resume negotiations, but Dr. Kirkwood had intimated that he could have no further correspondence on the subject. Some friends of Mr. Russell's then approached Dr. Kirkwood, and in reply to them he stated that he could only consider a judicial offer. That judicial offer had now been made in terms of the above proposal, and he (Mr. Rattray) was in hopes that it would be accepted. A similar offer had been made to the curators of Sir George Grant Suttie, and he understood it would be accepted. *There were no other creditors.*† Of course, if Mr. Tennent's agents declined to accept the offer, there would be no course open to his lordship but to grant decree for sequestration. There could be no harm, he thought, in continuing the case till a reply was received from Mr. Tennent's agents.

Mr. Wood said his instructions hitherto had been to press the application, and he had received no counter orders. He therefore could not consent to the delay.

The Sheriff said he would delay the case for an hour in order that a telegram might be sent to the agents.

This course was adopted, and Messrs. Bannatyne, Kirkwood, M'Jannet, and France, solicitors, agents for Mr. Tennant, replied to the effect that the offer was declined.

Mr. Wood then moved for decree.

The Sheriff awarded the same, and fixed the 20th inst. for the first meeting of creditors.

The Haddington Courier, Oct. 9, 1885.

(Copy)

Kensington Chambers, 73, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C., Oct. 7th, 1885.

Sir,—I beg respectfully to call your attention to the enclosed articles on "Scottish Agriculture," and especially to the case of James M. Russell, of Greendykes. The laws which permit such brutal injustice as this are simply infernal.

Lord Rosebery, in a letter to me, admits that the case is a most scandalous one, and Mr. Chamberlain is of the same opinion.

Can you do anything to help Mr. Russell and the farmers who are similarly situated? Things are getting very grave in the Lothians, and unless something is done soon the landlords will find themselves in a very dangerous situation.

I have been in East Lothian, and the feeling of indignation which is seething in the hearts of the electors bodes ill for the future unless this legal robbery and oppression are put an end to.

Your forthcoming speeches in Midlothian are being eagerly looked forward to by those interested in this matter; and if you make no reference to it, or refer to it in vague and hesitating terms, the consequences will be serious to Liberalism.

Personally, I will, as far as lies in my power, move heaven and earth to enable the farmers to avenge themselves upon the men who have ill-treated them so long.

I purpose publishing this letter with any reply that you may be inclined to send to me.

I am, etc.,

GEORGE BROOKS.

The Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, M.P.

This letter was treated with silent contempt.

* Another evidence that Kirkwood acted from personal pique. His high mightiness was offended because the truth was spoken, and so Mr. Russell is ruined. What a beautiful Christian spirit.

† Let this be noted.

(From the *Haddingtonshire Advertiser*, October 9th, 1885.)

By consenting to preside on the occasion of Mr. Goschen delivering a speech in favour of the candidature of Mr. Haldane for the representation of East Lothian, the Marquis of Tweeddale has been led into a breach of political etiquette, which may give rise to questions impertinent and otherwise in the House of Lords. It is considered bad form for a peer to take an active part in the election of a commoner, and readers may remember how, in 1880, Lord Rosebery was considerably annoyed by a question put to him regarding the part he played in the celebrated Midlothian campaign. It was true Mr. Gladstone was the guest of Lord Rosebery, but the only public part his lordship took in the election was on one occasion when he listened behind a door on the platform to one of those magnificent orations which have now become historic. During the election Lord Rosebery never presided at a meeting, never, in fact, put in an appearance at a meeting, except at the Waverley Market, which was not a strictly electioneering meeting; and it was only when the result of the poll was announced that he addressed a few words to the crowd assembled in front of his hotel in George-street, Edinburgh. The Marquis of Tweeddale's part in the East Lothian campaign will be much more pronounced than that of Lord Rosebery in the campaign of 1880, and the results may be expected to be proportionate. This is not all. By appearing in the chair at Mr. Goschen's meeting, which is simply an electioneering meeting, the noble marquis exposes himself to a heckling on questions with which he may personally have little to do, and his audience can hardly fail to remember the letter which has been addressed to his lordship by Mr. Russell, Greendykes, and which appears in our columns to-day. The case of Mr. Russell is a peculiarly painful one. It has attracted a great deal of attention, and is well worthy the consideration of the gentlemen who desire to represent this county in Parliament. It would be out of place for us to pass judgment on the merits of the case, seeing that we have only one side of the question before us. Mr. Russell has stated his case at length, and with apparent sincerity, but the landlords have been silent. On the other hand, Mr. Russell has not deigned to reply to remarks published in these columns by an anonymous correspondent, who criticised some parts of the case from a landlord's point of view; nor has he, so far as we are aware, replied to the remarks of the Earl of Wemyss in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, which were quoted in the *Advertiser*.^{*} We may remark, however, that Mr. Russell's case is a peculiarly painful one, that he has been hardly treated, and that there is evidently something rotten in the state of agriculture in East Lothian. It does not require one to be capable of finding "books in the running brooks," "sermons in stones," &c., to discover in Mr. Russell's letter to the Marquis of Tweeddale a great deal of political matter worthy of consideration at the present time. The whole letter is the bitter outcry of a Liberal against the callousness of Liberal legislators and Liberal landlords. Mr. Russell has been an enthusiastic Liberal all his life, yet it is from Liberals he has received the worst treatment. Indeed at the present moment his Conservative landlord is anxious to come to an amicable arrangement. This is not an argument in favour of Conservatism, but it is a satisfactory reply to those who are continually railing against Conservative tyranny and oppression. Mr. Russell admits that had he been a Conservative he would have had £30,000 just now instead of next to nothing. He also points out how Conservative landlords have given generous reductions of rent to their tenants, while Liberal landlords have demanded their pound of flesh and have refused to be merciful. We do not propose to follow the discussion further

^{*} The *Advertiser* conveniently forgot that I had replied to them.—G.B.

in the meantime, but we would commend Mr. Russell's letter to the careful consideration of our readers.

(From the *Haddingtonshire Courier*, Oct. 9, 1885.)

The proceedings in the Sheriff Court, in reference to the affairs of Mr. Russell, Greendykes, are of a very painful character. This is not the case of a farmer, who, commencing business with insufficient capital, and otherwise unfitted for the profitable cultivation of the land, falls into hopeless embarrassment, and has to make a surrender to his creditors. Mr. Russell, when he began farming in East Lothian, was possessed of ample means. His practical skill is on all hands acknowledged. Under his management the farm of Coalston Mains, not in itself a good subject, was made to yield splendid crops, and no doubt, had he continued in its occupancy, equally good results could still have been shown. Like many others, however, he failed to forecast the future, or to make allowance for those enormous importations of foreign produce that have flooded our markets and reduced the value of breadstuffs to a lower point than has ever been approached in the memory of the present generation. He believed in the power of well-directed capital and skill to enable him to offer a liberal rent for his present holdings at Greendykes and Dolphingston, and it is not his fault that his calculations, through the pressure of adverse seasons and constantly augmenting foreign competition, have proved altogether fallacious. Here, if ever there was a case, generosity and liberality in their dealings with such a tenant, might have been expected from his landlords. But it would appear that so far as regards his Greendykes farm, no mercy is to be shown him; that the proprietor intends exacting to the full all that the law allows to be claimed, and that to the last penny he is to be compelled to pay. It is not disputed that according to the current value of land in East Lothian, Mr. Russell has for years past been paying a much heavier rent than could be at present obtained. He has seen his capital year by year diminishing, and the prospect steadily opening up before him, unless relief comes, of being stripped of his all. Great allowances ought to be made for a man in such circumstances. Naturally of a proud and independent spirit, he would not care to go, cap in hand, to his landlords or their agents, with an *ad misericordiam* appeal on their bounty. However mistakenly, Mr. Russell seems to have thought he had a right to a substantial reduction on his rent, and if we are not misinformed, might at one time have had it, had he chosen to sue for it. This, however, he did not do; but rashly vented his grievances through the medium of the Press—a proceeding which, though it cannot be approved of, as his statements were of a needlessly offensive character,* is not, under all the circumstances, much to be wondered at, when it is remarked that Mr. Russell conceived himself a much-wronged man. The proprietor of Greendykes is of course entitled, if he sees fit, to put the full machinery of the law into operation against his unfortunate tenant, and may justify himself for so doing by insisting that Mr. Russell has himself to blame for his present position. But there is such a thing as public opinion, and if this court of last appeal the landlord will stand condemned, if, from a mere feeling of irritation at some ill-considered words of a drowning man, he perpetrates what will be regarded as an act of unmerited severity on a capable and deserving farmer. It is to Mr. Russell's credit that, up to the very last, he has kept his farms of Greendykes and Dolphingston in the very highest condition—so much so, that if these were let to-morrow, there would, we are persuaded, be no lack of

* This is an entire mistake, Mr. Russell never used offensive language.

offerers for them—and this cannot be said of most lapsing holdings in the county. It will be a great shock to the feelings of our county farmers if the extreme rigour of the law should be applied in such a case as this. There is room here for the exercise of a generous and forbearing spirit, and we are sure it would give great satisfaction to the people of East Lothian, among whom the name of Russell is so well known, if the proprietor of Greendykes should forbear to exact the full rigour of the bond, and deal tenderly with a gentleman, whose main offence, as against his landlord, seems to have been that he cried out when he felt himself hurt.

WRONGS OF SCOTCH FARMERS.

Mr. Chamberlain must know by this time that he spoke without his host when he declared that the farmers of Scotland, as a rule, were content with their position. The farmers of Scotland have made it their business, since Mr. Chamberlain's visit, to show that they are not content with their position, and this they have done so effectually that there can be no excuse for any further misunderstanding. The subject has been discussed by Farmers' Clubs in almost every county where sufficient farmers are left to form a club, and in places where no such discussions have been held the landlords have most considerately come to the rescue, to prove by evictions and other measures how wholly the farmers of Scotland are at their mercy. This is notably the case with East Lothian, one of the finest farming districts in Scotland. In the golden days of agriculture Mr. James Howard advised young English farmers to go and see the splendid cultivation of East Lothian, and Mr. Bright, in an address to the tenant-farmers of Great Britain, alluded to the farmers of East Lothian as "foremost in the knowledge and practice of their ancient and honourable occupation." But if Mr. Bright had attended the last meeting of the East Lothian Farmers Club, he would have found nine members present, and he would have heard the chairman, in explanation of their thinned ranks, declare that the county had become almost unpopulated, and that many of the farm-houses, formerly occupied by prosperous tenants, were now in ruins. In the face of such a fact as this, it is impossible to condemn too severely the Pecksniffian utterances of Lord Wemyss, the chief landowner in East Lothian, or the silly boast of Lord Haddington, who declared the other day that the landowners of East Lothian had shared the troubles of their tenantry, and assisted them in their difficulties so far as they possibly could. If this statement had been confined to farmers who voted Tory there might have been some truth in it; but it is notoriously the fact that many tenant-farmers of East Lothian have been evicted without compensation, because they supported the Liberal Party. Fenton Barns, and the cruel wrong that was done one of the first agriculturists in Scotland there, is not an old story yet. Sunnyside, from which a prominent Liberal farmer was driven without a penny, is a more recent incident. As for the smaller farmers, who accepted ruin quietly to please the laird, their name is legion. Lord Wemyss may recall a good number of them if he sets himself to work. They were victims to "the good understanding and mutual confidence that exists between landlord and tenant in Scotland," so boastfully spoken of by the landowners, but the only effect of which is to enable a landlord to turn out a tenant neck and crop who did not chance to suit him. It may be urged that tenants are fools to put their capital in farms without securing themselves by proper leases, and that if they suffer by such an unbusinesslike arrangement, they have no claim on public sympathy. That may be so; but

the immemorial custom in Scotland was to trust in the laird's honour, and it is only of recent years the farmers have discovered that this is a broken reed. We note with regret that while this political persecution has been going on in the Lothian, the few Liberal landlords have done little or nothing to aid the victims. They did not raise a finger to shield Mr. Russell, of Saughton Hall Mains, who was evicted at a loss of fifteen thousand pounds for supporting Mr. Gladstone, and is now in a lunatic asylum. They are doing nothing now to help his brother, Mr. Russell, of Greendykes, equally eminent as an agriculturist, who will leave fifteen thousand pounds in his farms, to be shared between his two landlords and the lawyers. In a letter to Lord Tweedmouth Mr. Russell declares that if he had been a Tory farmer he would have been worth £30,000, instead of being turned out as he is without a penny; and to the shame of all Liberals be it said that, after being rack-rented and badgered into bankruptcy, his Tory landlord offered to come to an arrangement by which he could stay on the farm until Martinmas, 1885, but his new Liberal landlord pressed for sequestration. Mr. Goschen has been down in that district lately, making a plea for the existing state of things, and displaying his usual solicitation for the poor landlords. A good understanding between landlord and tenant is much to be desired; but when this good understanding is only to be purchased at the cost of the privileges every thoughtful man holds most dear, we have no choice but to brand as obsolete and impracticable, and as a trap to keep the tenant bound body and soul to his landlord's service.

Echo, Oct. 15th, 1885.

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE SCOTTISH FARMERS' ALLIANCE.

Haddo, Laurencekirk, Nov. 6th, 1885.

Dear Sir,—I am very much pleased to see the interest you have been taking in the case of Mr. James M. Russell, Greendykes, who is now being treated in a most unjust and oppressive manner by his proprietors and their legal agents, affording one more proof, if such were needed, of the one-sidedness and injustice of our present system of land laws, and the power they give to an avaricious and unprincipled landlord, in combination with their lawyer factors, of ruining an industrious and capable tenant who was possessed of ample capital, the possession of which has excited the cupidity of those who seem to have lost all trace of conscientious scruples, if indeed they ever possessed such. I know Mr. Russell well; he is a man of unexceptionable character, and as a manager of land is equalled by few in this country; but it is precisely because the land has been well farmed and increased in value that these men are evicting him, that they may possess themselves of the value of his improvements.

Hard as Mr. Russell's case is, it is unfortunately too common to meet with such in almost every part of Scotland. The system pursued has not been to encourage good farming, or to bring the soil to the highest state of fertility. Any farmer acting on that assumption has generally found to his cost, at the end of his lease, that he has had to pay increased rent in consequence of his liberal treatment of the property of another, or leave his farm without any consideration or compensation whatever; whilst the careless slovenly man who did nothing got his farm at his old rent or at a reduction, simply because such a place did not attract any other competitors.

The system has been carried on without any regard to the rights of either individuals or the nation at large, but simply for the purpose of filling the pockets of proprietors and their legal agents.

Is it any wonder, then, with such a state of things existing, to find all over the country a demand that this state of matters shall be brought to a speedy termination; and, in view of such an extreme stretch of territorial rights, to find many demanding the nationalisation of the land? That the system of private property in land having worked so disastrously, therefore some other system shall be tried? That legislation, so diligently prosecuted for the benefit of a class and so unscrupulously used in the same direction, shall be reversed; and that our legislators shall in the future consider the great body of the people, the toilers and spinners who have made England and Scotland what they are, despite the unfavourable condition in which they have hitherto been placed? I could furnish you with many cases showing the truth of what I have stated: one case in Aberdeenshire, where an industrious man and his wife, possessed of a little money, leased thirty acres of waste ground from a proprietor on a bare hillside, the rent for which was to be £8 a year, a sum in excess of its value to him at the time. They set to work; suitable houses were built, the land was fenced and brought into cultivation. At the end of the 19 years' lease, the proprietor intimated that he would only grant another lease on condition that, instead of £8, as agreed upon during the first lease, the tenant should now pay £30 a year, which was agreed to. The proprietor had done nothing to reclaim the land from waste, he had neither fenced the land nor built the houses, but he claims £22 extra a year, the result of the tenant's industry and savings. The second lease comes to an end, and what is the result?—the rent is to be doubled, £60 a year is now demanded. The couple are now getting old, they have become attached to the spot with which so many of their early associations in life are entwined, and rather than leave they consent to the landlord's terms. But there is a limit to human endurance; the enormously increased rent with the diminishing strength and energy of age bear heavily on the old couple, and before the expiry of the third lease bankruptcy in circumstances and the unfeeling oppression of the landlord bring the aged and industrious couple to a pauper's grave. I could tell you of instances in which the tenant had erected buildings on the property of the landlord amounting to half the fee-simple of the land, and who had to leave the farm without payment in any shape for these buildings, which were necessary for the profitable working of the farm.

I could tell you of others where the landlord continued to hold the tenant to a bargain, made under very different conditions than now exist, until the tenant was bankrupt and ruined, yet notwithstanding, under the operation of laws made for the benefit of owners of land, made in a landlords' Parliament, the landlord managed to get full payment of all rents; whilst the friends of the tenant who lent him money and the tradesmen who supplied him with necessaries for his family and manure for his farm had to accept of 2s. per £. Is there any justice in such cases? Is it desirable or safe that such a state of matters should be allowed to continue? Is the life-blood of the nation to be spent that a small portion of the community may be allowed to live in idleness and luxury, and the money which should be returned to the soil in the shape of fertilisers squandered in the gambling saloons of the Continent.

I have very great faith in the fairness, the intelligence, and the determination of the new electors. Members of Parliament will now be elected under different conditions, and by a greatly enlarged body; and I believe that the course of legislation in this country will now proceed on a broader and more just basis than has hitherto been the case; and that it will not long be in the power of any firm of lawyers, with the sanction of the landlord, to treat any farmer in the shameful way that Mr. Russell, of Greendykes, has been treated.

I am, dear sir, faithfully yours,

Rev. George Brooks.

JOHN RAE.

LAND REFORM CONFERENCE IN GLASGOW.

A public conference on "The Destruction of Scottish Agriculture" was held yesterday afternoon in the Lesser City Hall, Glasgow. Mr. Wm. Riddell, tenant-farmer, Nether Hailes, who at one time was farmer candidate for East Lothian, was called to preside. There were also present:—Rev. David Macrae, Dundee; Rev. George Brooks, London; Mr. John Rae, president of the Scottish Farmers' Alliance, &c.

The Chairman spoke of the desirability of such a meeting, because it was of immense consequence to the nation that a thorough, genuine, sound reform be had in agriculture. Such a meeting was of special importance at this time when in a few weeks we would have a new Parliament assembled. He was sorry that in the meantime there was not sufficient interest taken in the matter by candidates or by the public. The Chairman next adverted to the Greendykes eviction case, which was to form the principal subject for consideration at the conference. He was a near neighbour of Mr. Russell, the farmer to be evicted from his farm in East Lothian, and he had great sympathy with him in his present position. He counselled free discussion on the subject, contending that it was only by arousing interest on such subjects that they could bring about a reform. (Applause.)

Rev. Mr. Brooks next explained how the conference came to be held. He had heard of the case some time ago, and on making inquiry in East Lothian he had seen Mr. Russell's neighbours and was forcibly convinced that it was a subject on which the public ought to hear something. (Applause.) It was the duty of all to protest where palpable injustice was being done. Mr. Russell was a most skilful farmer, who would next month leave a place after farming thirty years in the most skilful and successful manner, and paying enormous rents up to 1882, rents which everybody pronounced too high. The landlord would not reduce the rent, which he, Mr. Russell, could no longer pay, and he had to leave the farm practically a beggar, with £15,000 of his capital really confiscated by the landlord. He (Mr. Brooks) felt so indignant about the matter that he thought it would be a kind of luxury to denounce the men who were doing this. They were Glasgow gentlemen—Mr. Archibald Hay Tennent—who lived abroad, and Dr. Anderson Kirkwood his agent. It seemed that this was a case to bring before the Scottish people in some very effective manner. The Scottish people ought to make the most emphatic protest against such men as Mr. Russell being treated as he had been. (Applause.)

Mr. Craig, Laurencekirk, after speaking of the reforms necessary in the land laws, proposed:—

"That this conference, believing the present state of the land laws to be most injurious to the interests not only of agriculturists but of the whole country, urges on the Scottish electors the duty of eliciting from candidates a clear and definite expression of opinion thereupon; exhorts all candidates to support an advanced measure of land reform, and records its conviction that a bill for the relief of suffering agriculturists ought in the new Parliament to take the front rank amongst the measures of reform which will then be submitted."

Rev. D. Macrae said he had the greatest possible pleasure in being present to express sympathy with the object of the meeting, and he had also pleasure in seconding the resolution. He had come, not as a citizen roused by the sight of legalised iniquity, but as a Christian minister—(applause)—feeling that if their Christianity had nothing to say to all this, it had lost the spirit and power of Him whose name it bore. (Applause.) Churches,

it seemed to him, were bound to deal, not only with effect but with cause, not only with the men and women and children, whom a bad system had sunk in poverty and perhaps immorality and crime, but with the bad system itself. In the city of Glasgow were poor Highland people whom the land system in the Highlands had driven into the slums to swell the ranks of pauperism and vice. If it was the Church's duty to try and wrest those victims, it was also its duty in some respects—a still more important respect—to expose and denounce and seek to remove the system by which these people had been victimised. Yet what had the Churches done, established or non-established? The Established Church was said to be the Church of the poor. What had it done as a Church to save the poor cottars and the poor tenants from the land system that had ground them down, that makes life in many cases a constant struggle to keep the wolf from the door? (Applause.) Was it not a fact, as notorious as it was lamentable, that the Established Church had, as a rule—with some exceptions, but not the less as a rule—given its influence to the political party by whom specially that system of privilege and irresponsible and tyrannical power had been maintained? (Applause.) But were the non-established Churches much better? Let them look at the Free Church ministers in the Highlands, where their power was almost absolute. Had they done what they might to rescue the people from landlord oppression—to get back for them the right of which the Highlanders had been plundered? (Applause.) They had plenty to say about redemption and perdition, but what had they done to rescue them from the blast of landlord tyranny? It seemed to him, and what had been said at the conference had confirmed the supposition, that the evils of the present system were becoming intolerable. Under iniquitous laws, which a Parliament of landlords had passed in their interests, incalculable suffering had been inflicted on the people, burdens had been laid on the taxpayers, and agriculture had not only been injured but threatened with destruction. (Applause.) After pointing out several instances of the evils of the land system, Mr. Macrae contended that the true remedy would only be found when it was recognised that the land belonged to the State, that it belonged to the people who constituted the State—in other words, that it was God's gift to the generations to be administered in the way best suited to the people. (Cheers.)

Rev. George Brooks moved the second resolution, as follows:—

"That this conference, having heard the facts relating to the Greendykes eviction, hereby records its opinion that Mr. James M. Russell, the tenant of Greendykes, has been treated with great cruelty and injustice, and reprobates in the strongest terms the conduct of the landlord and agents in perpetrating such an outrage under the technical forms of justice; and the conference condemns the system under which such evictions are possible, and urges on Scotch reformers to secure by all constitutional methods of agitation the total abolition of that system."

Mr. Brooks at great length pointed out the facts connected with the eviction of Mr. Russell. The farmer had a lease. Owing to the depression in the agricultural trade he could not pay his rent, and it is said that because of Mr. Russell's outspoken temperament the reduction of rent given to many others was refused to him. The result was that Mr. Russell had been sequestered, and would be evicted without compensation for improvements.

Mr. John Rae, president of the Scottish Farmers' Alliance, seconded the resolution, which, like the first one, was carried by acclamation.

Mr. David Salmond proposed a third resolution, to the effect that a bill ought to be passed by Parliament, early in the first session, to relieve existing

leaseholders at their option, giving them full compensation for improvements, which compensation was to be fixed by a land court.

Mr. Rae seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously.

A Gentleman suggested that the resolutions should be sent to Mr. Gladstone.

The Chairman suggested that meetings should be held in all populous places, so as to induce the people to interest themselves on the question and enforce on candidates the advisability of securing thorough reform. He also advocated the appointment of a minister for agriculture. They must have leases abolished, and thorough compensation for improvement. A man could then leave with a year's notice and have compensation. A land court ought to be established.

Mr. Brooks suggested a deputation to Dr. Anderson Kirkwood, the agent of the landlord of Mr. Russell, with a view of trying to settle the matter.

Several, however, stated their opinion that Dr. Kirkwood would not receive a deputation on the subject, he having already stated that the law must take its course.

Rev. Dr. Fergus Ferguson, brother-in-law of Mr. Russell, returned thanks to Mr. Brooks for the kindness to his relative, of whom he spoke in the highest terms.

A vote of thanks to the Chairman terminated the enthusiastic meeting.—*Glasgow Herald*, October 31.

A P P E N D I X.

THE following articles have recently appeared in the public Press, and they are reprinted here in the hope of giving wider publicity to the facts with which they deal, and thus educating public opinion. The earlier articles appeared in the *Christian Commonwealth*, to which journal belongs the credit of having been the first to call attention to this iniquitous state of things. Much praise is also due to the *Pall Mall Gazette*, which, by inserting the two articles on "The Crisis in Scottish Agriculture," did much to arouse the general public out of its slumber. The action of these journals is the more raiseworthy, as the Press generally sternly Boycotts this vital question. The Scottish Press, not excepting even the Liberal portion of it, has been almost criminally silent, while Liberal farmers have been ruined.

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TENANT'S CONSCIENCE.

It is a commonplace to say that many of the customs and much of the spirit of the feudal system still survive in the laws and traditions which affect the holding of land. But trite as the saying is, it explains the existence of many of the evils of which we are now seeking to rid ourselves. It was of the essence of the feudal system not only that the landlord should hold his land direct from the monarch, on condition that he rendered certain services in return for it, but also that the landlord should regard those under him as serfs, without any rights either in the soil or in their own persons. Nothing could have been further from the thought of a feudal landlord than the idea that the man who worked on his land, whether as farmer or labourer, could have any rights of conscience that ought to be respected. He was regarded as a mere chattel, whose duty it was to do the bidding of his master and ask no questions. Little by little we have been emerging out of the barbarism of those olden times, but we are not quite out of it yet. The evolution has been exceedingly slow. In the haughty breasts of many landlords the old feudal spirit burns as fiercely as ever. Their bearing towards their "inferiors" is arrogant and imperious. They expect all the people on their estates to support their own political party, and to hold the same religious beliefs as they do; and they cannot tolerate the idea that these common people should think for themselves, and form their own convictions on moral and political questions. Every week incidents occur which show that the old spirit is still strong in the landlords, and that they expect their tenants and work-people to walk in the path marked out for them. Only the other day we saw hundreds of men at Eye and Woodstock voting in a certain way chiefly because their landlord desired and expected them so to vote.

But the tenant is coming to have a conscience, and to respect his conscience. He is rising into manhood; beginning to realise that he has rights, and to insist on those rights. Better than all, he is prepared to suffer for the sake of his convictions, and there is no sight on earth comparable to that of a man who is so loyal to truth, to his own better self, and to God, as to be willing to endure loss, persecution, and suffering, rather than palter with principle, deny God, or degrade himself. In every part of this United Kingdom to-day there are men, some of them poor and despised labourers, and others of them intelligent and well-to-do farmers, who are royal men in their fidelity, courage, and self-sacrifice. Such men are an honour to their kind, and a blessing to the nation. May their number be multiplied a hundred-fold! Some of the noblest of these men are to be found among the Scotch farmers, of whose condition the people of England are in the main ignorant. From information which we have received we have reason to believe that Scotch tenant-farmers who are Dissenters are treated with the greatest injustice and cruelty.

We have the particulars of several cases, concerning which we could give names, dates, and figures, and these cases reflect the deepest disgrace upon certain Scotch landlords, and the highest honour upon those who have been the victims of their tyranny and persecution. We could name one landlord who is at the present moment driving three farmers off his estate for the crime of worshipping God according to the dictates of their own conscience. The method pursued is a very cunning and a very effective one. Two men take farms in the same county, of the same area and value, in each case on a lease of nineteen years. One is a Tory, and an adherent of the Established religion; the other is a Liberal, and a Dissenter. Each agrees to pay about the same rent. The Tory farmer fails to pay up his rent in full the first year, the second, and the third, and so on to the end, and his landlord treats him leniently; the Liberal pays his rent up in full every year throughout the lease. What is the result? That he pays thousands of pounds more during the term than the other. Would not every reasonable man say that this man was the best tenant, and that when the time came for renewing the lease the utmost consideration should be shown to him? Assuredly, this is the conclusion that would be drawn by common sense.

But what actually occurs? This. When the time for renewing the lease comes round the industrious and thrifty farmer, who has honourably met his obligations, is told that he must pay an increased rent, and other hard conditions are imposed besides. The farmer who failed to meet his engagements is granted a lease at a much lower rent, in some cases at little more than half his old rent. It is easy to see how this works. The farmer who is leniently dealt with starts afresh, under far more favourable conditions; he remains on the estate and prospers. But the farmer who is harshly dealt with, unable to pay more rent, is evicted from his farm, and loses the capital he put into the land. He leaves his home a broken and ruined man, often to soon die in poverty, or to live a life which is worse than death itself. We know of cases in which Nonconformist farmers have paid during a lease £10,000, £12,000, £19,000 more than their Conservative neighbours for farms not a whit better; and at the end of the lease they have been required either to pay a still higher rent or go, while their neighbours have obtained a renewal at a little over half the old rental. Why this distinction? One tenant is a Dissenter, and the other is not. It is in this way that some landlords clear their estates of tenants whose religious and political creed they abhor. Some of these unfortunate tenants who started life with a capital of from £8,000 to £10,000, who paid their rent in full and improved their farms fifty per cent., and after all were evicted, are now in lunatic asylums, others are struggling with poverty, and still others have gone down to a premature grave. We repeat that such facts as these are a shame and a reproach to Scotland.

How long is this state of things to last? The Scotch people pride themselves on their manliness, independence, and self-reliance; they point with exultation to the splendid heroism of their forefathers, who bled and died for truth and for freedom. Why, then, do they not prove themselves worthy of their sires? What are the ministers of Scotland about, that they stand by in silence, and watch the perpetration of these cruelties? They discuss them in secret synods; but of what avail is that? Let them speak out. And the Liberals of Scotland—why are they dumb and inactive? We impeach the conduct of these landlords in the name of justice, and the conduct of those who abet them, or who refuse to condemn them. If they have any defence to offer, we shall be glad to hear it.—*Christian Commonwealth*, July 9, 1885.

UNJUST SCOTCH LANDLORDS.

A FEW weeks ago we called attention to the way in which some Scotch tenant farmers are made to suffer for conscience sake. Since then we have received further and fuller information upon the subject, and this only goes to confirm and strengthen all that we before stated. We return to the question in the hope that some of the influential public men of Scotland will take it up, and that they will not rest until the tyranny which is now practised shall be put an end to. It is not for us to urge the matter on party grounds, though we may say, for the benefit of those specially concerned, that we have good reason to believe, from the information which has reached us, that the Scotch farmers, as a class, are being entirely alienated from the Liberal party. The forthcoming election will probably open the eyes of the Scotch Liberal leaders to this fact, and when too late they may bitterly repent of the contemptuous indifference with which they have treated the tenant-farmers of their country. They know full well that men who have worked hard and paid their way, kept their land in prime condition, and more than fulfilled their obligations to the landlord, besides being thrifty to a fault, are being practically driven off the farms into which they have put their capital and skill, because they are Nonconformists, and yet they stand coolly and silently by. The result is that the farmers, realising that they have nothing to hope for from the Liberals, throw themselves into the arms of the Tories, who, being in possession of most of the land, have it in their power to reward party allegiance in the most substantial manner. Liberals who are too timid or too apathetic to utter a protest against the persecution of men whose only crime is that they are Liberals and Dissenters themselves, are unworthy of their name and their cause, and if the men from whom they withhold their sympathy should decline to stay in their ranks the fact is not to be marvelled at. For our own part, however, we dismiss all partisan or sectarian considerations from the discussion of the subject, which we

desire to treat solely on its merits. What we want is to see justice done, whatever party may lose or gain by it. At present gross injustice is done, as the following illustrative cases will prove.

Case No. 1 is that of two men, father and son, who held a farm of 500 acres for 38 years. During this time they drained the whole farm, and otherwise improved it, making it one of the most fertile and profitable in the district. At the end of this long term of years the son, who had come into possession, endeavoured to obtain a third lease of the farm, for which he offered a largely-increased rent, the increased rental being of course a tax on the tenant's improvements. But the factor demanded a much higher rent than he offered, or than he could afford to pay; in fact, the terms proposed were simply ruinous. He was compelled to leave the farm, and sacrifice all that had been put into it; he was in fact, though not in form, evicted. Why was he treated thus? Because he was a Dissenter. During the tenancy he paid some £6,000 more than a neighbouring tenant on a similar farm, simply because the latter got remissions of rent which were denied to him. A Churchman was put into the farm, and he does not pay more rent than was offered by the man who had lived on it for nearly forty years, and made it what it was. Case No. 2 is that of a man of high character and great skill as an agriculturist, who paid over £12,000 more during a nineteen years' lease than another tenant who occupied a similar farm, owing to the latter having received abatements of rent. But although he had paid so much more than his neighbour his rent was again increased at the end of his lease, and he was forced to leave the farm. He was a Nonconformist. Case No. 3 resembles the two previously considered in every respect save one. This man, instead of leaving his farm when an exorbitant rent was demanded, resolved to stay in it and do his best. The result was that his health soon gave way, and he found a premature grave. Others, under similar circumstances, have lost their reason and are now in lunatic asylums. Had they been treated with justice, to say nothing of consideration, they might now have been sane and useful men. We hear of one estate, belonging to a member of the present Government, on which three farms, all now held by Nonconformists, will fall vacant in November next. On two of these farms the buildings were erected by the tenants who preceded those now in possession. In other words, they were paid for out of the tenants' pockets, and not out of the landlord's, and the tenants had to leave them without receiving any compensation. It was from one of these farms that the tenant referred to as No. 2 was evicted some years ago. Some of the instances concerning which we have information cannot be called recent; others are literally of to-day. The cruel and unjust system to which we call attention has been going on for years, and it is in full operation still.

This system we arraign as unrighteous and unmerciful. We want to know how long it is to be tolerated. In the past Scotsmen have not

been wont to quietly submit to oppression. Not thus have they made themselves what they are. Is it to be understood that their sturdy national character has degenerated? If it has not degenerated they will surely arise and protest, not in words merely, but in deeds (at the ballot-box), that they will no longer meekly bear the heavy yoke laid upon them by landlord tyrants. Strong language on such a subject as this is natural and justifiable. Lord Elcho himself speaks of "deserted homesteads and empty farm-houses, which stand as monuments of ruined fortunes and broken hopes." Who is responsible for this ruin and desolation and misery? Who but such landlords as those to whom we have referred. Sir George Balfour, speaking at Edinburgh some years ago, said that some landlords acted towards their tenants "like pickpockets," and there can be no doubt that he was right. Lord Clarendon said that to confiscate a tenant's improvements or to refuse to compensate him for them was "felonious;" and Lord Salisbury, though he would hardly go as far as that, practically endorsed the statement. Professor Rogers, M.P., says:—"In old days freebooters levied black-mail on farmers. They stipulated that if the farmer paid a part of his profits to them, they could protect him against other marauders. The law put the system down, and very rightly. The process by which the landowners have cleaned the farmer out of his capital is like the way in which the freebooters treated him, with this difference, that they have done him no service in return." If this is true of landlords in general, it is specially true of those of Scotland. Mr. W. Riddell, who is the tenant-farmer candidate for East Lothian—a district in which the farmer has cruelly suffered—said, in May last, when referring to the feudal system, "That extortionate system was a great evil and wanted to be corrected. *A system worse than that had been practised pretty extensively in East Lothian*, where the whole tenants had been driven off the land. Lord Polwarth had something like twenty farms in his own hands." And if Lord Polwarth has treated his tenants like some other landlords we could name, he deserves to have his farms on his hands perpetually. Men who have shown no mercy to their tenants deserve no mercy themselves; nor are they likely to receive any. With what measure they mete it shall be measured to them again. Once more we ask what the Christian ministers of Scotland are doing? Dr. Walter C. Smith has denounced rack-renting as "monstrous," and has compared the threats of eviction by which it is enforced to a pistol pointed at a man's head. The Rev. Dr. John Ker, of the United Presbyterian Theological Hall, says that some Scottish farmers are worse treated than the slaves of America were. Speaking to a deputation of Scotch farmers, he characterised their treatment as disgraceful, and used the following simile:—"I know that the better you farm, the more industrious you are, the more economical you are, you are just like a hive of bees, you are the sooner ready for being smeeked!" To be "smeeked" is to be destroyed by smoke from sulphur. What are we to think of the Press and the Pulpit,

of the religious and political parties, who stand quietly by and see the Scotch farmers "smeeked"?—*Christian Commonwealth*, August 13, 1885.

SCOTCH EVICTIONS.

MORE than once of late we have expressed the opinion that Scotch agriculture, owing to bad land laws and bad landlords, is in a very serious condition, and in proof of this we have given several illustrative cases, all founded on fact. We also intimated that one farmer had been dealt with in a specially cruel manner, and that there was good reason to believe that he was treated in this way because he is a singularly independent man, and because he is suspected of giving information to and through the Press. This one case we pledged ourselves to inquire into, and we promised in due course to lay the result of our investigation before our readers. That inquiry has now been made on the spot, and in accordance with our promise we proceed to state its results. Let it be clearly understood that in doing this we give a simple and plain statement of facts. We have coloured nothing, distorted nothing, exaggerated nothing. From beginning to end there is not one word of fiction; we give a bald narration of literal truth, and leave it to convey its own lesson and make its own impression. The gentleman of whom we write is Mr. James M. Russell, a large farmer in East Lothian. Mr. Russell farms 900 acres of land, and he is one of the most skilful and successful farmers in that county, if indeed he is not the most skilful and successful. He farms on the most approved scientific principles, using machinery very extensively, yet at the same time employing an extraordinary amount of labour, while he lavishes the most expensive manures upon his land, to the astonishment and admiration of his neighbours. The result is that he extracts more from his land than any other man in the district. His crops are the talk of the county. To all this we may add that Mr. Russell is a man of substance and of unblemished character. He began life with a very large capital, and throughout his whole career his honour and integrity have been conspicuous. Some idea of the extent of his operations may be gathered from the fact that he pays £3,000 a year rent, and a similar sum for labour. This large business is conducted in the most methodical manner; strict accounts are kept, and these accounts are periodically examined by a professional accountant.

Mr. Russell has two farms, both held on a 19 years' lease; in one case 13 years of the lease has expired, and in the other case seven years. The farms were taken when the law of Hypothec was in existence, and the result of this was evil in two ways. The effect of the law of Hypothec was to force up rents to at least one-third above the fair value of the land. No farmer could obtain land except at the fictitious

value given to it by this bad law. Every man who took land while that law was in operation had to pay 33 per cent. more than it was worth, and he could not help doing it. He was the victim of evil circumstances created by landlords. Another evil consequence is that although the law of Hypothec has been abolished, those leases which came into existence previous to its abolition are still as much under it practically as they were before. That is to say, tenants who had to pay a rent one-third above the fair value in order to get land at all, have still to pay that rent until the lease expires. The legislation which abolished the unjust law of Hypothec did not relieve them. Mr. Russell is a tenant of this class. For one of his farms he pays £3 12s. per acre, and for the other £3 15s. These rents he paid in full up to—and including—the year 1882. In 1877, a notoriously fatal year to agriculturalists, he lost £3,000 in one farm (sunk that amount of his capital), and yet he asked for no abatement of rent. But in 1882 he did ask for an abatement, and as farmers all around him were getting large reductions of rent, his request was an eminently reasonable one. It was refused, nevertheless. In the case of one farm he was told that he must wait until the heir came of age; and in the other case he was informed that the trustees, in whose hands the property was, had no power to grant any reduction. In both cases Mr. Russell paid what rent he could afford. The result was that considerable arrears accumulated. These arrears were withheld in the hope of getting a permanent reduction of rent, and negotiations to this end were carried on for many months.

In the case of one farm Mr. Russell offered to pay £2,000 to avoid sequestration, on condition that the rent should be reduced in future. His offer was refused. In the other case he made no offer, as the landlord was enormously wealthy, and represented that he was not anxious about the arrears, besides which the tenant estimated that he had paid during the lease £4,800 more than the fair rent—than he would have paid but for the law of Hypothec. The landlord's agent sent a valuer over the farm in December, 1884, with a view of effecting a settlement. His report was not made till July 27th, 1885, and during the interval the tenant was hard pressed for the arrears. The report of the landlord's valuer was, however, very fair, and altogether favourable to the tenant, as it frankly admitted that the farm was rented one-third higher than it ought to be; in other words, it admitted that the landlord had received £4,800 more than he ought to have done. When this report was rendered, on July 27th, the landlord's agent showed a spirit of marked friendliness towards Mr. Russell, and led him to expect that the arrears would be wiped out and a reasonable rent fixed for the future. But three or four days after this Mr. Russell was suddenly summoned to Edinburgh, and was told that it had been decided to sequester him, no reason being given except that the agents of the other farm wished to do so. This, on the face

of it, has all the appearance of having been deliberately planned; and it is believed that some letters sent by Mr. Russell to the local papers were the cause of this sudden change of front, though these letters were moderate in tone and truthful as to their matter, and in no way touched the merits of the case. Thus the matter stands to-day. Mr. Russell has a threat of eviction hanging over his head, and it is quite possible that he may find himself in a few months homeless and almost penniless. The whole story is as discreditable to the landlords as it is honourable to Mr. Russell; the whole country-side is astir with excitement, and rings with indignation; and there are numerous portents that a terrible crisis is impending. It is to be hoped that Mr. Russell's friends will act in a prompt and decided manner, for there is not a moment to lose. His case is a typical one, and we have stated it at length, not so much for Mr. Russell's sake as for the sake of the principles involved. He is only one out of hundreds. The Farmers' Alliances ought also to be able to do something to help a member who is in such circumstances as these; if they cannot or will not do this, it is difficult to see how they are likely to confer much practical benefit upon farmers.—*Christian Commonwealth*, Sept. 3, 1885.

THE CRISIS IN SCOTTISH AGRICULTURE.

I.—THE PRESENT SITUATION. BY THE REV. GEORGE BROOKS.

THE present condition of Scottish agriculture may best be described in one word—ruined. This will probably be scouted as an alarmist view by those who are ill-informed on the subject, or who are indisposed to study it; but I doubt if there is a practical agriculturist in Scotland, be he landlord or be he tenant, who will not at once admit it to be the sober truth. I do not intend, however, to convey the idea that Scottish agriculture is irretrievably ruined, but merely that it is so far gone that no recovery is possible until there is a radical change in the conditions. Let the present distress be relieved by just laws, and the Scotch farmer will again lift up his head, while his landlord will be able to live, if not in such luxury and splendour as in the past, at any rate in more comfort and security than at present. But in order to obtain this improvement there must be changes, and vital changes too. Nor must they be long delayed.

I have just returned from East Lothian, where I have pursued some inquiries into the actual state of affairs, conversed with farmers and men of business, and was able to realise generally the situation. What I saw and heard impressed me with such a sense of the gravity of the crisis that I feel constrained to lay the facts before the English public. The Lothians are generally acknowledged to be among the finest, if they are not the very finest, agricultural counties in the United Kingdom, and East Lothian ranks the highest of the three.

This is, therefore, the best district that could be selected to illustrate the general condition of Scotch agriculture, inasmuch as it has been able to hold out the longest against the combined influences of bad laws, bad landlords, and bad seasons. If things are desperate here, it may be taken for granted that they are still worse elsewhere.

In this county of East Lothian (or Haddingtonshire) the state of things is positively distressing. Every man one meets speaks in a tone of despair; gloom seems to have settled over everything and everybody; and this in spite of the fact that the natural advantages and beauties of the district are great, and that it is admirably served by railways and commands good markets. Farms by the score are degenerating through neglect into their original wild state. In one part of the country it is possible to go ten miles as the crow flies without finding a farmer. There are farms, but they are in the hands of the landlords, who are doing their best with them; and there are farmhouses, but they are unoccupied, the tenants having left the homes in which they had lived for many years, and in which many of them hoped to die. Why they left we shall see later on. One landlord has every farm on his estate on his hands, and no doubt he would gladly welcome back the tenants whom he oppressed in bygone years. Nearly all of them are glad, except in cases where the tenant is known to have capital, to take whatever rent they can get. When the tenant is a capitalist they insist upon the uttermost farthing. All this, of course, tells severely upon the trade of the locality, which is mainly dependent upon agriculture. The shopkeepers are being ruined with the farmers. I was told that the banks in Haddington might almost as well close their doors, so meagre is the business they are doing. Many of the working men, too, are unemployed, as much of the land is being starved for want of both labour and manure.

The following testimonies, from men who are entitled to speak with authority on this question, will show that I have in no wise overstated the gravity of the case. Mr. W. Riddell, the tenant farmer candidate for East Lothian, declares that "a system of utter extinction is being practised upon some estates; an attempt to drive the system of the holding of land from the face of the earth altogether." He describes the feudal tyrant as "one who had a great love for political power, as also a great love for cash; a determination to draw the utmost penny from the land;" and then he proceeds: "That extortionate system was a great evil, and wanted to be corrected. A system worse than that has been practised pretty extensively in East Lothian, where the whole tenants had been driven from the land." This speech was delivered in May. Mr. Rae, president of the Scottish Farmers' Alliance, speaking at Aberdeen last January, spoke warmly of the remedial effects of the Irish Land Act, and expressed the opinion that a serious mistake was made in not passing that Act sooner. Then he continued: "We very much fear that the Government have fallen into the same fatal delay in regard to England and Scotland,

. . . . A deputation has visited both Mid and East Lothian, and we heard incontestable evidence of a much worse state of things existing in these fine counties than we had before dreamed of. We believe that if all the cases of hardship, tyranny, and terrorism that have taken place under our present landed system could be embodied in a volume, such a storm of indignation would be evoked as would very speedily bring the oppressors and their reign to an ignoble and ignominious end." The *North British Agriculturist* says: "The question now comes to be, What is to be done? There is no use in longer quibbling over the existence or non-existence of severe depression in agricultural quarters. It is daily asserting itself in a manner fitted to cause apprehension in territorial circles. Rents in the grain-growing districts this year cannot be paid, and already in many cases heavy arrears have accumulated. We heard of a Lothian farmer the other day who has paid little or no rent for the last three years, and still he sits, giving little heed to threats of removal." (December 24, 1884.) This is what Mr. James Watson, Conservative agent for East Lothian, says: "The position of the landlord at the present moment was one which was beginning to affect the pocket very considerably, not only of landlords themselves, but of mortgagees on land. Many proprietors were suffering at the present time in a way which the outside public had no idea of. He knew one estate in particular on which the land did not return a single penny to the proprietor. . . . As regards the farmers, he did not think that during the last ten or twenty years farming had been a profitable business, and during the last ten years especially he might say it was entirely at a discount. . . . Where the future tenantry of East Lothian is to come from was a question which remained to be solved. The tenantry were certainly not coming from the sons of East Lothian farmers, or even from their connections, and as the source of supply was becoming shortened in the county, it would become much more so as time went on." (Speech at Haddington, October 6, 1882.) The *World* said last year: "The long-continued agricultural depression seems to have told with especial force in East Lothian, a county which has always been justly celebrated for the advanced state of its agriculture. Some twenty years ago the farmers were almost exclusively of the 'gentleman farmer' type, men of wealth and standing; but the bad times have almost cleared the county of such men." Lord Elcho, the present member for the county, and son of one of the chief territorial magnates of the district, said at Dunbar on January 16, 1883: "He himself personally knew that there was no more depressing spectacle than that which he had lately witnessed when driving about the county canvassing it, coming across, time after time, the sight of deserted homesteads and empty farmhouses, which stood there as monuments of ruined fortunes and broken hopes." After this nothing more need be said in order to show that a crisis of a most calamitous character has overtaken the men of East Lothian. Under these disastrous

circumstances it is not surprising that there should be considerable "apprehension in territorial circles." The landlords are in fact beginning to tremble in their shoes. Their condition of mind is admirably illustrated by an incident which was told to me with respect to Lord Wemyss. This nobleman began to enlarge and improve his house at Gosford, and he proposed to spend upon these alterations no less than £100,000. And this while some of his poor tenants were paying their rents out of capital, or, in other words, were on the high to beggary! But he had scarcely begun to carry out his plan before he stopped it. Just about that time a deputation of farmers waited upon him to state their grievances and seek relief. He pointed them to the work which had been so suddenly stayed, and assured them that he had been obliged to abandon his scheme owing to the badness of the times. On their expressing some incredulity in regard to this statement, he repeated it, and added that in these strange days things were so uncertain that he did not know whether Radical reformers would leave him even a cottage to live in.

East Lothian is a charming residential locality, combining beautiful views of sea and land with an invigorating air, and consequently mansions of the nobility and gentry abound. A few years ago "society" would have been horrified if these fine country seats had been let to brewers and merchants for the sake of raising money for their impoverished proprietors. Yet at the present time it is a comparatively rare thing for one of these large houses to be occupied by its owner. In most cases it is either let to a stranger or it stands unoccupied. Such facts as these speak volumes as to the financial difficulties of the landed proprietors. And yet these men, with an infatuation which is perfectly astounding, continue to oppress their tenants by extorting rack-rents. They are simply killing the goose that lays the golden eggs. As the result of this suicidal policy many of them find that the golden eggs no longer come. They are justly punished for their selfishness and folly. In my next article I will show how the crisis has been caused.

Pall Mall Gazette, Sept. 12, 1885.

A LIBELLED LANDLORD.

To the EDITOR of the PALL MALL GAZETTE.

SIR,—A friend has drawn my attention to a paper in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of September 12, headed "The Crisis in Scottish Agriculture," written, it is stated, by the Rev. George Brooks. Who this gentleman is, or what his acquaintance with Scottish agriculture in general or with East Lothian in particular may be, I cannot pretend to say; but in the paper in question he has chosen to refer to me, and if what he says of Scottish agriculture is no better founded than his information concerning myself, I would respectfully warn the readers of your paper

not to put faith in any statements coming from his pen. The following passage shows alike the accuracy of the writer and the spirit in which he writes:—

“The landlords are, in fact, beginning to tremble in their shoes. Their condition of mind is admirably illustrated by an incident which was told to me with respect to Lord Wemyss. This nobleman began to enlarge and improve his house at Gosford, and he proposed to spend upon these alterations no less than £100,000. And this while some of his poor tenants were paying their rents out of capital, or, in other words, were on the high road to beggary! But he had scarcely begun to carry out his plan before he stopped it. Just about that time a deputation of farmers waited upon him to state their grievances and seek relief. He pointed them to the work which had been so suddenly stayed, and assured them that he had been obliged to abandon his scheme owing to the badness of the times. On their expressing some incredulity in regard to this statement, he repeated it, and added that in these strange days things were so uncertain that he did not know whether Radical reformers would leave him even a cottage to live in.” Now, what are the facts? It is not true that I ever contemplated spending £100,000 on the unfinished house I have inherited, or even half that sum. It is not true that I had scarcely begun to carry out my plan before I stopped it. And if “a deputation of farmers,” &c., is intended to mean a deputation of my own tenants—and taken with the context this is necessarily the intended implication—the statement as regards truthfulness goes on all fours with the others to which I have given a direct contradiction. Three gentlemen, no doubt, one of whom is a tenant farmer, but no tenant of mine, came to me some months ago, having, as they said, been advised to do so by Mr. Duncan Maclaren, and their object was to ask me to communicate with my co-proprietors in East Lothian with a view to their making needful concessions to their tenants. As this request assumed that proprietors in East Lothian were not doing this, I, after first saying that were I to interfere in other men’s concerns I should be told to mind my own business, asked them to go through the list of county proprietors with me and see whether it was not, as I believed, the case that they were, as a body, doing all they could to help their tenants in their difficulties. The result was an admission on the part of these gentlemen that, with hardly an exception, the landlords in East Lothian were, to the best of their ability, helping their tenants to tide over bad times.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

WEMYSS.

Gosford, September 15.

P.S.—I observe that in the paper in question my son, Lord Elcho, is referred to as “one of the present members for the county.” I am inclined to think that the writer never set foot in East Lothian, or he could not have failed to know that this county has never had more than one representative in Parliament.

Pull Mall Gazette, Sept. 17, 1885.

A LIBELLED LANDLORD

To the EDITOR of the PALL MALL GAZETTE.

SIR,—I was pleased to see in your issue of to-day a letter from the Earl of Wemyss, the more so as his lordship substantially confirms the statements which seem to have aroused his anger, and which he endeavours to discredit in so unworthy a fashion. What I said was—(1) That Lord Wemyss began to enlarge and improve his house at Gosford at the estimated cost of £100,000; (2) that he abandoned his scheme owing to the threatening aspect of agricultural affairs; and (3) that he stated all this in effect to a deputation of farmers. My authorities for the statement that Lord Wemyss proposed to spend £100,000 on his house are the *World*, the *Haddingtonshire Advertiser*, and some half-a-dozen farmers who reside near Gosford, and who themselves stated the fact to me. The *Haddingtonshire Advertiser* of April 11, 1884, said, quoting from the *World*:—"The Earl of Wemyss is spending £100,000 in adding to and improving his house at Gosford, which will be one of the finest places in the kingdom." Lord Wemyss now denies that he ever contemplated spending £100,000 on his house, or even half that sum; but he admits, by implication, that he did propose to spend a very large amount. Did he carry out his intention? If not, why not? So much for my first point.

With regard to the second point, Lord Wemyss says it is not true that he had scarcely begun to carry out his plan before he stopped it. Will his lordship plainly tell us whether he did carry out his original plan or not? I hardly think he will; and if he did not, why was it? On the third point, Lord Wemyss says: "If 'a deputation of farmers,' &c., is intended to mean a deputation of my own tenants, then Mr. Brooks' statement is incorrect." There is much virtue in an "if." I meant what I said, not what Lord Wemyss says I said. My assertion was that a deputation waited upon him in order to bring before him the distressed condition of the farmers. He admits it was so.

Now I echo Lord Wemyss' question, "What are the facts?" and I confidently leave your readers to judge between us. Perhaps the contemptuous references of this nobleman to myself are hardly worthy of my notice. With an air of lofty disdain he asks, "Who is this gentleman?" If I had had the good or ill fortune to inherit an aristocratic title I might have been more widely known than I am now, whether I was worthy of being so known or not. But I may remind Lord Wemyss that the fault of being comparatively unknown is one that is capable of being cured. I beg to assure Lord Wemyss that I have "set foot in East Lothian," and to some purpose, as he may yet find out. As to the "spirit" in which I have written, I think that perhaps the tenants of East Lothian are more competent judges on that point than the landlords.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

GEORGE BROOKS.

Pall Mall Gazette, Sept. 18, 1885.

THE CRISIS IN SCOTTISH AGRICULTURE.

BY THE REV. GEORGE BROOKS. NO. II.—CAUSES OF THE CRISIS.

IN a former article I described the critical and alarming condition of agriculture in Scotland, especially in East Lothian, and I promised to show in my next paper how this state of things has been brought about. The chief causes of the crisis are the following:—Exorbitant rents, the selfishness and cruelty of landlords, the cowardice and helplessness of tenants, the apathy of the general public, and religious bigotry and political spite. This last is in some respects the most powerful and important cause of all, and therefore I will deal with it first.

Mr. Chamberlain said in his speech at Glasgow on Tuesday that he had "received within the last few weeks many names with particulars attached of cases in which Nonconformist tenants have been evicted or unfairly treated in Scotland, as in England, because their opinions differ from those of their landlords." This statement was greeted with cries of "Shame." But these cries would have been far more loud and general if Mr. Chamberlain had chosen to unfold the tale with which he is by this time tolerably familiar. As it was not expedient, perhaps not possible, for the right hon. gentleman to do this in such a speech as he was delivering, I will supply the deficiency, assuring my readers that the facts which I here state are the very same facts (or some of the very same) to which Mr. Chamberlain referred. In every case I could give names and figures, were it prudent or necessary to do so.

I met a gentleman in East Lothian the other day who, in conjunction with his father, held a certain farm of five hundred acres under lease for the long period of thirty-eight years. During this term they drained the entire farm, and otherwise improved it, at their own cost; besides raising it to a high condition of fertility by a liberal use of manures and feeding stuffs. What was the result? That at the end of thirty-eight years the son, who had then taken possession, was virtually evicted from the farm. He offered a largely-increased rental for a third lease, such increase, of course, being a tax on his own improvements; but the factor demanded a much higher rent than he offered or could afford to pay, and he was forced either to remain on terms which were simply ruinous, or to leave and sacrifice all that he had spent. He left, and all his improvements were confiscated. Why was he thus treated? The only reason that can be assigned is that he is a Dissenter, for he was and is a man of the highest character. An Edinburgh theological professor (U.P.) says of him, in a letter which now lies before me, "A truer or more worthy man does not exist." An Established Churchman was put into the farm from which the Nonconformist was evicted; but the Churchman pays, not more rent, but less than the Nonconformist offered. And yet the latter, in conjunction with his father, had been on the farm nearly forty years, and had made it what it was! This worthy Dissenter was unable to obtain another farm,

except at an absurdly high rent, owing to the operation of the law of Hypothec, and this rent he consented to pay rather than have no farm at all. During his tenancy of this farm, which he still occupies, he has paid from £6,000 to £8,000 more rent than his neighbour on a similar farm. His neighbour attends the Established Church, and is an active supporter of the Tory cause; while he attends the Free Church, and is a Liberal. This gentleman told me that although he is paying £500 a year more rent than he ought to pay, the utmost concession he could obtain was a paltry abatement of 15 per cent., and that this had been allowed him only since 1881.

Another case of which I could state the particulars is that of a Nonconformist of the highest repute, and renowned for his skill as a practical farmer, who, during a nineteen years' lease, paid from £12,000 to £15,000 more than a Tory neighbour on a similar farm, and who ultimately had to retire with the loss of all his capital. A third case is that of a man who, instead of leaving his farm when a largely-increased rent was demanded, resolved to stay for the sake of his large family and do the best he could. The result was that he soon found a premature grave. A threat of eviction is now hanging over the head of Mr. James M. Russell, of Greendykes, who farms 900 acres, and is generally reputed to be the best farmer in East Lothian. He is a man of intelligence, independence, and integrity; his character is absolutely without a blemish, and his eminent skill is unquestioned; and when he commenced farming he was a wealthy man. He is a Nonconformist and a Liberal. During the worst seasons he paid his rent in full, though in one year he lost £3,000 on one farm. Not until 1882 did he ask for any abatement, and then it was refused; nor has any abatement been granted him down to the present time. If Mr. Russell had been treated in the same way as some of his neighbours he would have been better off by some thousands of pounds than he now is. One of the tenants has received abatements to the amount of £5,812, another to the amount of £11,625; and if Mr. Russell's larger rents had been reduced in the same proportion, the corresponding abatements in his case would have been £10,165 and £16,942. A third tenant has been treated still more liberally, and if Mr. Russell had been placed on the same footing as this more fortunate neighbour his rent would have been reduced by £20,139. If Mr. Chamberlain had brought out these scandalous facts the indignation of his Glasgow audience—and, indeed, of his larger audience, the British public—would have known no bounds.

The second principal cause of this crisis is extortionate rents. One of the principal landlords in the Lothians has, I believe, admitted that land in those counties is rented at least 35 per cent. above its value. In East Lothian opinion is practically unanimous that rack renting is the principal cause of the present trouble, and that the only hope of improvement is in a considerable and permanent reduction of rent. Mr. Clay, an eminent agriculturist, who was a member of the Agricultural Commission which reported in 1882, is of opinion that there must

be a reduction of 50 per cent. all over Scotland. In Berwickshire rents are being generally reduced in this proportion. This is merely a sign of what must soon become universal.

I had intended to say something in detail of the selfishness of the landlords in sacrificing the interests of their tenants to their own sporting proclivities, and even to their caprices; but space will not admit of this. Speaking generally, however, it may be stated that most of the homesteads in East Lothian have very tragic histories to tell. To a man who knows the facts as they have happened during a period of thirty years, and who is able in memory to re-people the county with the folk who have lived and moved in it during that time, the whole earth seems to become vocal, and to utter forth its testimony against the unrighteous deeds which have been done upon it. Here lived a man who committed suicide; there, a man who, driven mad by worry and injustice, ended his days in an asylum; while yonder dwelt a widow whose helplessness and lonesomeness did not avail to protect her from the rapacity of men who, like some of old, "devour widows' houses (and fatten on their food), and for a pretence make long prayers." There are hundreds of young men living to-day, some in Scotland and others in distant lands, who carry and cherish in their breasts a burning sense of the wrong that was done to their parents years ago, and who are determined in some way to avenge them of their adversaries. One such man, now a poor Primitive Methodist Minister, had to bury his father at his own expense, though that father had once been a prosperous farmer, and would, if he had received his due, have left something considerable to the son. Professor Blackie, in a note to myself, testifying to the accuracy of my description of the present state of affairs, refers to the "systematic depopulation of East Lothian." The Lowlands have had their "clearances" as well as the Highlands, and the language which Mr. Chamberlain used at Inverness respecting the latter may equally well be applied to the former. In the one case, as in the other, "industrious, hardworking, God-fearing people were driven from the lands which had belonged to their ancestors, and which for generations they had cultivated." And it is verily true that the history of these clearances is "a black page in the account of private ownership in land." I am far from saying that all the landlords of Scotland, or even of East Lothian, have treated their tenants in this inhuman fashion, but I emphatically assert that many of them—and some of the very chief—have been guilty of such injustice. Of the supineness of the farmers I cannot here speak at length. I am strongly convinced, however, that if the Scotch farmers had shown more spirit and vigour, if they had been more conscious of their power and had made it more sharply felt, they would not be in their present plight. They are now beginning to realise this. The lessons of the past few years in regard to Ireland have not been lost upon them. A different temper is taking possession of them, and when they are once fairly roused they will be dangerous men to trifle with. Mr. Stuart, of

Inverfiddich, addressing his brother farmers, asked them how long the "present iniquitous system" was to last; and his reply was, "Just so long as men sit idly by holding their hands, looking on inevitable ruin." He is right. If the farmers of Scotland would be free, they must themselves strike the blow.

The only other cause that need here be mentioned is the apathy of the general public with respect to agricultural questions. As a nation we have never yet realised the vital importance of our agriculture. Our farmers, as a class, are strongly convinced that the trading, the professional, and the working classes are not only indifferent, but positively hostile towards them; and there is only too much ground for this belief. The public may, however, plead that they are in this matter simply following the evil example of their leaders, whether in Parliament, in the pulpit, or in the press. Now, this is in every way an unfortunate state of affairs. Agriculture is our chief industry. Mr. Goschen tells us that the profits assessed on land are £140,000,000 a year, as against £3,000,000 on iron ore works. Mr. Chamberlain said at Glasgow: "Agriculture is very much depressed, and all our trade and manufactures are suffering in consequence." In these circumstances it is marvellous that people interested in trade and manufactures (and who is not?) should fail to take an interest in agriculture. It is to be hoped that our statesmen will set a better example in this respect than they have done hitherto. If they wish to move the heart of Scotland let them grapple boldly with this subject. It is far more vital at the present time than either Disestablishment or Free Education. The unfriendly attitude of Liberal associations and newspapers in Scotland has alienated the farmers by hundreds. If there is one thing which more than another threatens Liberal supremacy and endangers Liberal unity in that country, it is the suicidal policy which is usually adopted in dealing with the farmers. And yet the Liberal leaders ignore all this. If they continue to follow this course, they will have a rude awakening some day before long. Mr. Gladstone, who is member for one of the Lothians, has been staying with Sir Thomas Gladstone, who is said to have no less than fourteen farms on his hands. Here, surely, he had a fine opportunity for studying a very serious phase of the land question. It is to be hoped that when the late Prime Minister next addresses his constituencies his speeches will afford conclusive evidence that he is at last alive to the momentous character of the present crisis; for, unfortunately, no such evidence is supplied in his new manifesto.—*Pall Mall Gazette*, September 22, 1885.

