

## THE SCOTTISH LAND LEAGUE OF AMERICA.



A newspaper press that conceals from those more immediately concerned important facts, because they may prove unpalatable, fails in its first duty to its patrons. Though our sphere of duty does not quite lie in that direction, we have hitherto occupied such a position in connection with the present social movement in the Highlands as to make it impossible for us to free ourselves altogether from this responsibility, though it is so much overlooked by those whose special function it is, we hold, to keep those more immediately interested fully informed of war-clouds and looming danger.

It is admitted on all hands that the movement for Land Law Reform in Ireland would have failed of any great success were it not for the aid and impetus given to it by the material sympathy of Irishmen abroad, especially from the United States of America. The Highland movement has made remarkable progress hitherto without any such outside aid, but it appears from an account of the inauguration of the Scottish Land League of America, which we give below, that Scotsmen from home are going to imitate the example of the expatriated Irish, by aiding their oppressed countrymen at home in the most practical manner. Is it a kindness; is it wise even to conceal this from the landlords of the Highlands at the present time? Their best friends are those who will take care to see that they are kept fully informed of what is going on around them; of the signs of the times in which we live. It is a token of culpable weakness when people imitate the Ostrich, thinking that, if they do not themselves see or know of the tide that is closing round them, they are in perfect safety—that history and great social movements are to stand still because those to be affected put their heads out of sight, and do not choose to listen, or to look ahead, and face the danger or provide against it. From some questions asked at the Crofters' Royal Commission at one of their sittings at Inverness, it seems to have dawned, even then, upon some of the more far-seeing amongst the Commissioners, that Highlanders abroad might possibly follow the example of their

Irish brethren in this matter, unless a change in the condition of their fellow-countrymen at home soon took place; for the following queries were put to the Editor of the *Celtic Magazine* by Sheriff Nicolson and Professor Mackinnon, when the annexed answers, some of which are now in course of being verified in Chicago, were made in reply :—

*Professor Mackinnon*—“As a matter of fact, we find now the poorer they [the Crofters] are, the more closely they stay at home?”

*Mr Mackenzie*—“Yes, and the moment they get better off there is always a tendency to go away—I am happy to say not going away and forgetting their people at home, but constantly sending home means, without which their relations would in many cases be paupers.”

*Professor Mackinnon*—“Have you found at home and abroad that there is a remembrance by folks that are going away of the poorer folks that are left behind?”

*Mr Mackenzie*—“My experience is that generally Highlanders who go away and leave their parents at home are very mindful of them, and send them home considerable sums of money.”

*Professor Mackinnon*—“So that in that respect they stand well generally.”

*Mr Mackenzie*—“Generally.”

*Sheriff Nicolson*—“I have heard it said that the Irish are better in that respect?”

*Mr Mackenzie*—“I think not. The Irish send home more money, but for a different purpose. We have never appealed to the Highlanders to send home money except for their own relations, but I have not the slightest doubt if an appeal were made to them they would send home money for other purposes as well as the Irish.”

*Professor Mackinnon*—“Have you accounted in your own mind for the extreme reluctance of the people to leave their homes when they are poor, although they have no reluctance to leave when they are well off?”

*Mr Mackenzie*—“Well, I think it is the case that when people are poor they are, as a rule, comparatively distrustful of countries far away from themselves, and there is a kind of feeling, in addition to the despair and hopelessness of their existence, that they are going away, not merely to a strange country, but almost to a strange world. As education advances, in ten years we shall have a very different state of matters in the Highlands from what we now have?”

*Professor Mackinnon*—“You recollect that thirty or forty years ago emigration was rather a favourite scheme among the people?”

*Mr Mackenzie*—“Yes, but at that time a great many of them went away in communities, and they felt when they were going altogether, that they would at least have some of the associations of their own country, and see some of their friends, but according to the present system, there is no chance of doing that. When I was over in Canada, I had the honour of an interview with the Marquis of Lorne, and discussing that question with him as well as with the Premier of Canada. I tried to impress upon them the necessity of giving an opportunity to Highlanders of going out as a colony to Manitoba, but I found the Canadian Government had strongly set their faces against anything of the kind, and would not listen to any proposal on the basis of people settling there in bodies, the principal reason being that they had given out the land in Manitoba in squares, every second one of which they granted to the New Syndicate constructing the Canadian Pacific Railway, and they cannot now give it out in dis-

tricts. The Opposition party are of a different opinion, but they have very little chance at present of getting into power.”\*

The opinions expressed in these answers are still unchanged; and we shall not be surprised to see the Highlanders of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and other British Colonies following the example of those of the United States, though it has been said, and said, we fear, with some amount of truth, that the Highlanders of the Dominion especially are so much interested in getting their countrymen at home to emigrate and to populate the Great North-West, that their personal interests in this direction have hitherto kept them from making any move to aid their oppressed countrymen at home. This, if true, is as short-sighted as it is selfish and unpatriotic; for the Highlanders have resolved that they will not emigrate until they have first fought the battle of freedom successfully in the Highlands, and when that is realised every man will be at liberty, if he cannot find room and comfort in his own country—where sheep and deer now occupy the place of men—to go where he pleases. Meanwhile our Canadian and other Colonial fellow-Highlanders may rest assured that the sooner they take steps to aid their countrymen at home in asserting their native independence and securing their freedom in the Highlands the sooner and the more effectually will the surplus population—satisfied that there is a surplus over and above what their native country will maintain in comfort—take to emigration, knowing that they will then leave their parents, relatives, and friends in a position where they can support and take care of themselves, instead of which, were they to leave them now, they would do so, in most cases, in misery, certain to end their days in the Poor-house, or, in the case of the great majority who are still too noble-spirited to enter it or accept the Parochial dole outside, die prematurely from semi-starvation and exposure for want of the necessaries of life—food or clothing—in their latter years. The better class of Highlanders will never emigrate so long as their doing so will involve their relatives in such a plight, even should they themselves have to undergo a life-long misery by remaining at home to help and provide for them. And will any Highlander at home or abroad blame his countrymen for such a filial—such a natural affection for their

\* *Minutes of Evidence*, p. 2717.

parents and friends? No! they will on the other hand admire it, follow the example of the Highlanders of Chicago, by helping them, in the most practical form, to procure independence, freedom, and comfort in their native land. The surplus population will then be glad to emigrate to lands where their countrymen shall have already endeared themselves to them by timely and patriotic sympathy, in a critical period of the history of the Highlands; and the necessity for such generous and material sympathy is sure to make a deep and lasting impression upon the minds of a people, themselves generous and noble-minded even yet, though they have so long been trampled under the foot of the oppressor, and had their characters so bitterly and constantly reviled by those who would still continue that oppression.

What the Scottish population of Chicago are doing—and in which their example is apparently to be followed over all the American continent—will be seen from the following abridged report of a meeting of The Scottish Land League of America, held in Chicago on the 28th May last. It should be read and pondered by all—landlords, tenants, and others—interested in the present Shaking of the Dry Bones in the Highlands of Scotland. The *Chicago Times* of the following morning reports that—

Farwell Hall was filled with an assemblage of typical Scottish-Americans. The occasion was a mass meeting of Scotchmen in sympathy with the movement recently inaugurated towards forming a Land League in aid of the Crofters of Scotland, and for the purpose of affording them material help in their efforts to obtain justice from the landlords of their native country. There were a large number of ladies present, and the meeting was a remarkably enthusiastic one. The addresses were eloquent and forcible, and were received with warm and frequent outbursts of appreciation and indorsement. Among the prominent gentlemen upon the platform were:—Rev. Duncan Macgregor, ex-Governor Beveridge, Judge Moran, M. W. Ryan, D. C. MacKinnon, L. S. Shaw, T. B. Livingston, J. C. Macpherson, J. C. Newcome, William Macgregor, William Murdoch, William A. Robertson, Alexander Fraser, Duncan Cameron, Charles A. Macdonald, James Armstrong Robert Macdonald, Rev. Dr Mackay. The Scotch Company of the 2nd Regiment, I.N.G., entered the hall, and took seats in the auditorium.

The Rev. Duncan Macgregor opened the meeting, and announced the objects sought to be obtained. He said that the men in favour of the movement in behalf of the Crofters of Scotland had not forgotten the glorious traditions which had made Scotland's history. All mankind, he said, were gradually learning the solidarity of the human race, and whenever the voice of distress was heard, and when the people called out against oppression and injustice, then always come a warm and sure response from friendly hearts in all sections of the world. He then referred to the present condition of the Crofters in their lowly cabins and squalid homes, groaning

under the tyranny and oppression of their landlords. They ought to be infused with a renewed spirit to battle against the wrongs they were enduring. Eviction had been the rule, and man was regarded less than the beast. Over two million acres of the best land in Scotland had been wrenched from the farmers and made the home of the deer, the coney, and the pheasant. The crops of manhood had given place to herds of animals. When the Crofters had complained of their treatment they were arrogantly told that emigration was an excellent thing for them. He would like to see a general emigration among the landlords. The Crofters had resolved to endure their squalor and poverty no longer. The last straw had broken the camel's back, and "the Campbells are coming" in their might to overthrow their oppressors. He cited a number of cases of hardship and suffering among this class of Scotchmen, and demanded to know by what right man appropriated to himself more land than he could cultivate and deprive honest men of the means of supporting themselves and their families. This meeting had been called to assist these suffering men of Scotland, and to put new life into their hearts. As the boys of Paris carried their tiny banners bearing the words "Tremble tyrants, we are growing;" so this Land League of America would grow until the grand object of its organisation was accomplished. Mr Macgregor then nominated ex-Governor John L. Beveridge as the presiding officer for the evening.

On taking the chair Mr Beveridge said that as a Scotchman he was glad to talk to Scotchmen and their descendants. The condition of the Crofters was worse than that of the ancient slave in America. The crofters had no rights which the property-owners were bound to respect. They built their black mud hovels and lived under the cruel tyranny of their landlords, who ground them to the earth. The slave was denied his liberty, but his master, for his own security, took care of his person and his physical wants. They had met for the purpose of encouraging those down-trodden countrymen of theirs, and to assure them that the Scotchmen of America were heart and soul in favour of their cause, and would labour in their behalf to the best of their abilities.

Dr Wilcox, the secretary, then read the following resolutions, which were unanimously adopted, amid loud applause:—

We, the citizens of Chicago, in mass-meeting assembled, express our heartfelt sympathy with the Crofters of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland in their peaceful and constitutional agitation for the reform of unjust and oppressive land laws. *Resolved*, That we commend the course they have adopted in demanding the right to live as befitting freemen in the land whose history has been made illustrious in the annals of the world by their deeds of valour and unswerving loyalty.

*Whereas*, Scotchmen in America, while knowing the wrongs of the Crofters, and feeling keenly the resultant social degradation, have had no organisation which enabled them unitedly to express sympathy with the Highlanders in their uprising against unjust land laws:—*Resolved*, That we express our gratification at the fact that the Scottish Land League of America has been organised in Chicago to meet a long-felt need, and that as it seeks constitutional changes only by constitutional means, we hereby pledge ourselves to give the League such assistance as may be needed in carrying forward its purely philanthropic labours.

*Whereas*, During the American Civil War for the liberation of the slaves, the Scottish people were on the side of freedom, and also when the fire ravaged Chicago, the cities of Scotland were among the first to render solid sympathy:—*Resolved*, That we hereby declare the movement in aid of the Crofters to be worthy of full support, and recommend it to the liberality not only of our citizens, but to that of all friends of the oppressed on this continent. We appeal to philanthropic organisations and to the public press to lend such help as will raise a fund commensurate with the needs of the Scottish Crofters, and worthy of the high rank which our nation has taken as the friend of the down-trodden in all lands.

Judge Moran was the next speaker. He said that the old system of land tenure was that the chiefs of the clans held the land for their adherents, and under circumstances most favourable to those who tilled the soil. This system had been replaced by landlordism and feudalism. This system was the most unjust that could be established. The rural populations of Ireland, Scotland, and England were being depleted, and the husbandmen were fast becoming the victims of poverty. This system of landlordism had engendered a fight in Ireland years ago, which was still raging, and he thanked God that Scotchmen had taken up the fight on the other side of the channel. As a brother Gael he sympathised heartily with this great movement in favour of the Crofters. The broad lands were intended by the God of nature and of man to be tilled by the industrious and thrifty farmer for the support of himself and family, and any attempt to deprive him of his just rights should be met with bold and resolute opposition. As one who knew something of Scottish history, and as one who had read the beautiful writings of her poets and novelists and historians, he was earnestly in sympathy with the movement now successfully started. He bade them God-speed in their great work. Success would surely crown their efforts, and the Crofter victims of land tyranny and landlord oppression would be assisted to arise in their might in defence of their rights and their homes.

A collection was then taken up to aid the work, and a handsome sum was realised.

This is the first chapter in a new departure in connection with the great movement now going on for the amelioration of the condition of the Highland people; and we scarcely need say that we wish and expect for it every success. At the same time, we warn the proprietors to take heed in time, and in a manly way, before the power has for ever passed away from their hands, to meet the requirements of the case by conceding, in an ungrudging spirit, the just demands of the people.

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THE INVERNESS BURGH GUARD IN THE 17TH CENTURY.—While looking over some old Burgh papers lately, we came across the following, which is interesting as showing from an official source the different places in the town at which the guards were posted two hundred years ago. The document is dated 1691, and is as follows:—

“ Account of coals and candles that ye  
Guard had in winter, and what ye  
Magistrats judge may now serve in summer.

“ The mayne guard in winter, eight score, and now ye half, being four score, may serve.

The bridge guard, fourtie, and now ye half may serve,

The kirk port, fourtie, and ye half may now serve.

The east port, fourtie, and ye half may now serve.

The east barne, fyve score, and ye half may now serve.

The Castle port, fourtie, and ye half may serve.

The Castle guard, fourtie, and ye half may serve.

The kilne end, fourtie, and ye half may serve.

There is 3 lb. and half of candles in winter allowed for all the guards a night, being fourtie-two in number, and now we judge the half may serve.”