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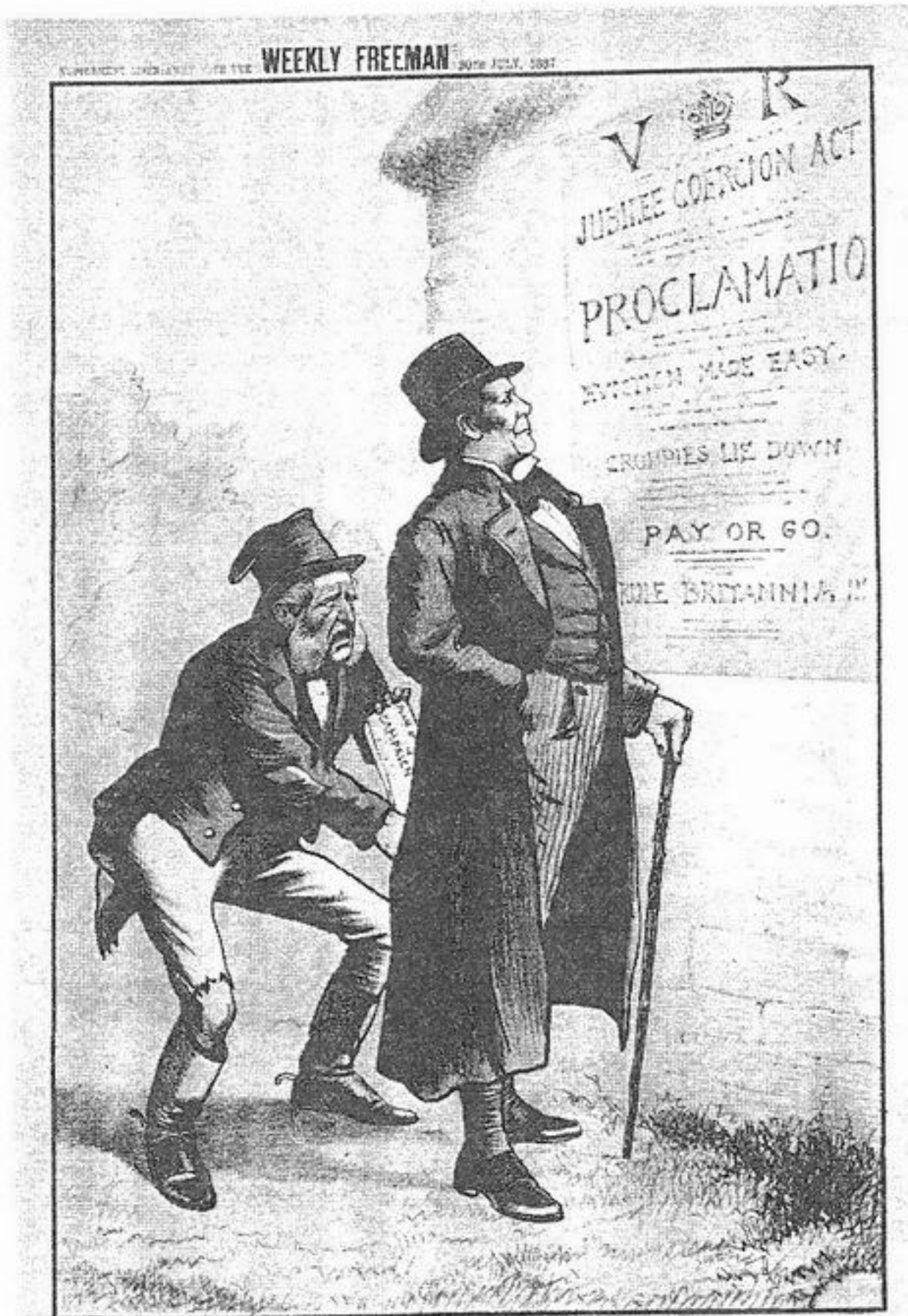
THE PLAN OF CAMPAIGN

1886-1891

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SOLD AGAIN.

Our old "Friend," the Irish Landlord, believing he has frightened the wits out of Farmer Pat, proceeds to pick his pockets, and finds that all that the poor man carries about him is the PLAN OF CAMPAIGN!

Meredith made a sworn statement that the district of Castlerea had been proclaimed under the Crimes Act and that the outrage on McLaughlin had been perpetrated to intimidate him into joining the Plan of Campaign. On 14 March, the local Resident Magistrate, N. L. Townsend, was instructed by the Attorney-General to begin a sworn inquiry into the case.

The investigation unearthed the entire saga of the Plan of Campaign on the estates of H. S. Pakenham Mahon, J. C. Murphy, Mr Worthington and G. W. Sandford and produced sufficient evidence to implicate more than forty individuals in the conspiracy, including John Fitzgibbon, 'the chief promoter and worker of the Plan in the Castlerea neighbourhood' and a number of MPs, including J. R. Cox, Conway, Willie Redmond, Daniel Crilly, David Sheehy and John Dillon. It was decided not to proceed against the elected representatives but Fitzgibbon and six locals were charged with taking part in the Plan of Campaign and of inciting tenants not to pay their rents.³¹

Divisional Commissioner Byrne noted with satisfaction that the imprisonment of Fitzgibbon, whom he termed 'a most mischievous and dangerous agitator', was expected to have 'a very beneficial effect'.³² It was certainly a blow to the organisation of the Plan of Campaign throughout County Roscommon. At the beginning of September 1888, the Plan came to an end on the Pakenham Mahon estate. The tenants had originally demanded an all round reduction of forty per cent but settled for abatements ranging from fifteen to twenty per cent, with the landlord paying all the costs. The tenants demanded their campaign rents from Fitzgibbon, who was the treasurer of the 'war chest'. According to the police report, he paid over the rents but said, 'it was the last time he would ever try to do anything for them and that he was being betrayed all round'.³³

William O'Brien and John Mandeville were the first individuals to be prosecuted under the Crimes Act of 1887. On 11 and 13 August, they both urged the Kingston tenants to resist evictions, an offence punishable under section two. After their trial at Mitchelstown on 9 September, which neither attended, three civilians were fatally wounded by the police. This event was emotionally, if hyperbolically, designated 'the Mitchelstown Massacre' and earned for the Chief Secretary the unenviable sobriquet of 'Bloody Balfour'. Gladstone's catch-phrase, 'Remember Mitchelstown', came to symbolise the union of hearts that bound nationalist Ireland to liberal England.³⁴

The Chief Secretary's resolute defence of the Mitchelstown police and magistrates in the face of almost universal public criticism had an incalculable effect on the morale and confidence of the constabulary

and castle officials alike.³⁵ During the ensuing years, the Crimes Act of 1887 was relentlessly implemented by a revitalised Irish administration, inspired by the purposeful leadership of Arthur Balfour. Up to 7 May 1889, twenty five MPs, including C. A. V. Coneybeare, member for North-West Cornwall, were sentenced to prison terms for offences committed under the act. Another notable 'martyr' was the English eccentric and Home Rule sympathiser, Wilfrid Scawen Blunt. 'I was delighted to see you had run Wilfrid Blunt in', Lord Salisbury complimented his nephew in October 1887.³⁶ John Dillon, David Sheehy and James Gilhooly were each gaoled on more than one occasion, while William O'Brien was sentenced to no less than six terms of imprisonment between 1886 and 1891.³⁷

Most of the transgressions were connected with the agrarian agitation, such as inciting to join the Plan of Campaign or to boycott or to resist evictions. David Sheehy was prosecuted for advising tenants at Frenchpark on 25 September 1887 to keep the roofs over their heads: 'If Lord De Freyne makes an attempt to evict you I hope there is not a man, woman or child but will barricade their holdings and will assist each other against the evicting forces'. After serving two separate prison terms for inciting to boycott, James Gilhooly, MP for west Cork, said, 'he would be glad to take part in the Plan of Campaign whenever he may be called on to do so'. W. J. Lane, MP for east Cork, said, in mid-January 1888, that he had 'advocated the Plan of Campaign and, please God, I will do it again. I will do it before I go into gaol and after I come out, if there is a necessity for it'. Alexander Blaine was sentenced to four months imprisonment, which was increased to six months on appeal, for advocating the Plan at Derryart, County Donegal, in early January 1888. 'Mark the enemy and shun him', he advised. 'The word used to be in the past, agitate!, agitate!, agitate! The word today is boycott!, boycott!, boycott!'³⁸

Several Plan of Campaign priests were imprisoned under the Crimes Act. No doubt they drew inspiration from the guidance given to Canon Keller of Youghal by the Bishop of Cloyne. Dr John McCarthy intimated his approval of Keller's activities on behalf of the Ponsonby tenants and in particular his refusal to disclose the whereabouts of the tenants' 'war chest'. Dr McCarthy counselled:

There is something above law and that is justice and while circumstances may arise... that would warrant one in disobeying the law, no circumstances can ever arise that would justify a man in acting in opposition to the plain dictates of justice and it is by these