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The Irish "Plan of Campaign." To the Editor.

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The following letter appeared in DAYLIGHT (a Norwich weekly journal) of 18th December, 1886.

THE IRISH "PLAN OF CAMPAIGN."

1885

To the Editor.

SIR—The "Plan of Campaign," now being carried into effect by the tenantry on a daily increasing number of Irish estates, may be described as a sort of measure in substitution, which is the natural and necessary consequence of the rejection, last session, by Parliament of Mr. Parnell's Bill for the relief of the Irish tenant farmers. By the terms of this Bill, any tenant lodging one-half of the current half-year's rent, due by him, in Court could have had his case adjudicated on by the Government Land Commissioners—most of them landlords or land agents—who were to be empowered to make reductions, not exceeding 50 per cent., off the said rent, in case the tenant could prove that, owing to bad seasons and lowered prices of produce, he was unable to pay his full rent.

Knowing that this Bill, even if passed, would fall far short of fully meeting the necessities of the case, Mr. Dillon, and, I think, other members of the Irish party, solemnly warned the House of Commons that, in case the Bill were rejected, the said members would feel it their duty to do all in their power, by means inside the law, to protect Irish tenants this coming winter from being compelled to pay rents, the exaction of which would leave them all but starving.

As everyone knows, the Bill was rejected, and the "Plan of Campaign," as before stated, is the necessary consequence of such rejection. Under this plan, when an Irish landlord refuses to make a reduction off current rents, such as the low prices now ruling would justify—and such as have been made by large numbers of English landlords, including Mr. W. H. Smith, Sir M. H. Beach, and other members of the present Government—the tenants combine, in a sort of Trades' Union, and strike against paying more than they think fair. They do not in any case refuse to pay any rent, but they pay, into the hands of trustees chosen by themselves, the current half-year's rent, less the deduction demanded by them, ranging from 20 to 40 per cent., and inform the landlord, or agent, that he can have the whole sum at once, on demand, if he is satisfied to accept it. Should he refuse, and proceed to extremities, the money so lodged with trustees will be used to defray the costs of resisting his action, and he need not

expect ever to receive more than the balance left, after defraying such costs. To those who object to this course of action as unfair or one-sided, the answer is ready, that the tenants would have preferred to have had their claims adjudicated on by courts of law established by Government, and, through their representatives in Parliament, asked to have such courts created and empowered. Parliament, having, at the instance of the landlords, refused to establish such courts, the tenants have been driven to take the best course which seemed open to them for obtaining justice.

If any of your readers doubt whether Irish tenants have a substantial equitable claim for rent reductions off ordinary and judicial rents at the present time, I would strongly advise them to read the articles now appearing, and others which have recently appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, (and *Budget*), and *Daily News*. In these articles they will see able and graphic descriptions—many of them written on the spot, and all from an Anglo-Saxon newspaper correspondent's point of view—of the actual state of affairs in some of the more distressed and agitated parts of Ireland. Next to visiting Ireland in person, I do not see how better an Englishman can inform himself of the realities of agricultural life in Ireland than by reading such articles, written by men able to see both sides of the land question. Those in the *Pall Mall Gazette* are to be soon published* in the form of an "extra."

Hoping you may see fit to publish the foregoing,

I am, yours very truly,

EDMUND HARVEY.

Grange, Waterford, Ireland,
14th December, 1886.

[NOTE.—It is to be observed that, whereas the rent reductions on current half-year's rent, demanded by tenants under the Plan of Campaign, have ranged from 15 to 50 per cent., the permanent reductions actually made by the Irish Land Courts, which are largely composed of landlords, and men of the landlord class, have, within the last two months, in many cases, been as high as 50 per cent., or even higher. Up to about a year ago, such reductions averaged, roughly, about 20 per cent., whilst for the year 1886 they have averaged nearly 30 per cent., a strong evidence that land has fallen heavily in value within a year or two. As Irish tenants have, almost invariably, had to make all the improvements, including building houses, &c., on their farms, they cannot, when prices fall, as at present, leave their farms on the landlords' hands, as English tenants can, without making the landlords a present of all said improvements, often amounting in value to several hundred pounds.]

* Now published, under the title "Reduction, or No Rent," price 6d., or post free 7d., at the *Pall Mall Gazette* Office, London.

Copies of this letter will be supplied, gratis, post free, on application to the writer, at above address.