Copy out-letter book of William Blacker, Markethill, Co. Armagh, as agent for various estates including the Gosford and Cope estates in Co. Armagh and the Dungannon Schoolands, Co. Tyrone. Contains the following letters.

Letter To J S Murray Esq, Torren[?] Hill, Dungannon, concerning terms of settlement with the National Board of Education on whose Dungannon Schoolands estate Murray was a middleman until expiration of his lease in 1831. Murray was owed arrears by his sub-tenants and under existing land legislation he could still lay claim to these arrears although no longer the leaseholder. The arrears constituted a serious impediment to future improvements on the estate and Blacker proposed that the Commissioners of Education should advance money to the value of the tenant's seizable assets, excluding bedding and potatoes, as well as a proportion of the arrears of those who possessed no assets of any description, in order to eliminate Murray's demands.

'Having had the benefit of what information Mr McArthur has collected and being anxious to bring the question at issue between you and the Board to a prompt conclusion, I think it best to ask you whether you would be satisfied with the following arrangements which there is no use in my recommending to the Board without first ascertaining whether you will think it for your advantage to adopt it.

'My idea is that the Board should guarantee to you, payable in December next and August following all such arrears as there were assets in the tenant's possession adequate to the payment of, if brought to sale now. It does not seem to me that you could have expected these rents to have been cleared up sooner even if you were in the collection yourself, besides which I should further propose that where there were no assets or not enough for a term's rent the Board should engage to pay you half a term's rent next November twelvemonth. By this arrangement you would have the full value of everything you could with any regard to character, bring to sale and half a term's rent besides in such cases where there were no assets whatever. By assets I mean those articles which are usually sold under distress for rent which does not extend to bedding and the potatoes necessary to support existence. I shall expect to hear from you in reply to this with the least possible delay ...'

15 February 1832

Letter To W C Quinn Esq, Secretary to the National Commissioners of Education, 12 Stephen's Green North, Dublin, detailing proposals for the improvement of the Dungannon Schoolands estate which had suffered from neglect because the majority of tenants were engaged in weaving coarse linen. Blacker first employed a surveyor to prepare a detailed valuation of the estate, a demanding task since one-third of the total surface of the estate was swampy bogland. He proposed that the Commissioners should pay off the rent arrears due to the middleman Murray and have the tenants repay their debt by labour service for improvements. He proposed that lime should be lent to the tenants to increase productivity on arable holdings and that a Scottish agriculturalist be introduced to instruct in both animal and arable husbandry.

'I am favoured with yours of 13th and am happy to find the Board are satisfied to have the survey proceed which is already far advanced. I have written by this post to Mr Sweany and shall report his answer when it comes to hand. It has been a work of great labour to go round the numerous tenantry on the school lands and take account of their circumstances, stock, etc, but it has been at length completed and from the best consideration I can give to all the circumstances I would recommend an arrangement with Mr Murray upon the following terms if it can be made viz:

'That the Board should guarantee to Mr Murray the payment of all arrears for the payment of which there are sufficient assets to be liquidated by two equal payments in December and August next.

'Where the assets are short of making out an even term or where there are no assets whatever the Board to allow Mr Murray half a year's rent payable November 1833.

'I should wish to know what the Board thought of this proposal which I think is a liberal one for to make and will place Mr Murray in a very unpleasant situation if he proceeds to sell goods of the tenants for rent which the Board offer to secure the payment of in a reasonable time nor can he well complain that the Board should substitute new tenants when he refuses to take their security for more than what the old tenant possesses. It is my intention however to sound[?] Mr Murray by proposing to recommend the above arrangement for the Board's adoption substituting half a term's rent in the place of half a year's rent where there were no assets. The entire of Mr Murray's demands to be assigned over to the Board.

'Supposing this arrangement made, I have little, indeed I may say no doubt of getting in money what will settle with Mr Murray and getting in work what will make up the remainder of his claims which will be so much gained by the Board but I beg most particularly to direct the attention of the Board to this circumstance that if the tenant is obliged to sell his assets to make the payments which they are liable for he is ruined most effectually and this will be his fate if he is forced to sell them to pay the Board's guarantees just the same as if they were sold to pay Mr Murray and the only way the Board can prevent this result from overtaking those who have anything still left or that they can repay the fortunes of those who have nothing is by lending lime and that immediately. The loss of a month in doing this is the loss of the whole year for it loses them the crop which is absolutely necessary to prevent the necessity of selling any stock they may have or to get it where they have not.

'The Board may rely on what I say that this is absolutely necessary to the well being of the property and that they should have an experienced agriculturalist to direct them as I formerly stated to instruct them in the drainage and cultivation of their farms. I have the experience of the good effects of this system daily before my eyes in the properties under my management here and I know what it will do. This is necessary no matter what takes place with Mr Murray and it should by no means be neglected.

'With a view to facilitate this I have had strict search made and have found out an excellent lime quarry upon the estate and I find that I could persuade a man of the name of Hazleton one of the most respectable tenants on the property who would undertake to build a kiln and sell the lime on credit to the tenants in distress upon my guaranteeing to stop the amount due him out of the first money that came into my hands from the produce of their crop. This is not as long credit as they would require but still it would be of immense information to them and there only remains to get a man competent to direct them to put the property into a thriving state. If the Board don't feel themselves authorised to give the salary there is plenty of cut out bog which is lying perfectly waste and now cut down, so much that if any more turf are made in it it will be flooded which I think I could induce some Scotchman to come over and undertake the reclaiming of and instruct both by precept and example but I don't like this [method] of remuneration so much as at on[c]e giving the necessary salary. The value of the reclaimed land which the tenants would be glad to bring under his directions I will answer [for], for it would in three years be equal to 10 times his salary.

'The importance of the object will I hope be a sufficient excuse for writing to you at such length. I may safely say that the comfort and happiness of some hundred families depends upon the prompt compliance of the Board with my wishes in this respect and not only this but the money produce[?] of the property. I trust therefore to your good feeling with the least possible delay to urge the Board to come to a favourable conclusion, always keeping in their view that if they don't see the good effects, I predict they can only suffer the trifling loss of a man's salary for the time they may choose to continue him so that they see at once the worst that can happen and it may be relied on that if the assistance I recommend is not given, there will be more lost in income than what all the assistance would amount to. 30 barrels of lime will manure an acre which will cost about 15s and the crop of potatoes produced by it would be worth from £7 to £10 which sufficiently points out its importance ...'

'PS I ought to mention that if the arrangements don't immediately take place with Mr Murray I would forthwith recommend the substitution of other tenants and of course the assistance to be given would be given to them.'

14 February 1832

Letter To William Reid, Banff, Scotland, concerning the appointment of a forester, a gardener and an agriculturalist probably for work on the Gosford and Dungannon Schoolands estates. Blacker had a marked predilection for Scottish agriculturalists who could be hired for £30 or £40 per annum in addition to a rent free house. Where land was available for reclamation they were given substantial holdings on which to demonstrate their expertise to show to an agriculturally ignorant tenantry the advantages of improved methods. Another major task for the agriculturalist was the supervision of turf cutting and in particular the depth to which turf cutting was permitted since too deep an excavation prevented drainage and reclamation. This task was made more difficult by the fact that the best turves were found at the lowest levels.

'Be so good to let me know the name of the forester you alluded to some time back and see if some small advance of wages would tempt him to come over here. I have a comfortable small house in the Park now vacant and could make him comfortable. I think Mackie is getting on better than he did at first. Wilson is will considered and I am going to better his situation by an addition to his wages. I shall be glad to hear from you under cover to Earl of Gosford, Boodles Club, London.

'As the house is vacant I am anxious to place one on it. If he takes a trifle more than stated you might engage him and send him over forthwith.

'I am likely in some little time to want a good working gardener that understands his business but can't speak positively yet, likewise another agriculturalist that knows his business and had a good manner. I have at present the management of a property in which there is a good deal of cut out peat or turf bog with a good clay bottom and if there was any enterprising man that had capital to establish himself in a farm of 30 or 40 acres I might be able to place him in a farm of that extent and get him a small salary for giving instructions to the tenantry on the property which is a small one of about 2,000 arable acres.

'You can keep these things in view but don't engage any without further notice. A lease of 20 years and his own life would be given as soon as he had entered upon such a rotation as would enable him to feed his cattle constantly in the house or straw yard which I consider absolutely necessary in farming.'

[February 1832]

Letter To J S Murray, Torron[?] Hill, Dungannon, concerning difficulties in reaching a settlement over rent arrears due to Murray as a middleman on the Dungannon Schoolands estate. The Education Board and Murray disagreed on the sum required to compound the arrears and until the agreement could be reached Murray refused to relinquish his claim on the tenantry.

'There is no denying the truth of what you say that the mention of a certain sum would shorten matters very much but you will on consideration see that I could not do that without making the examination into the means of payment possessed by every individual which would be a most troublesome undertaking and what I should not wish to embark in until I had got you and the Board to agree upon the principle of the settlement. I would recommend in the interior your looking again over the list of arrears furnished me and adding the more [ ] arrears which you say are omitted and to make the thing entirely correct.

'Mr McArthur has inquired some little into the particulars and find you have returned some names that are unknown on the estate entirely. The proposal made is I think so fair that I can't anticipate any objection and I would require the assignment to the Commissioners of every claim you possess, let it be good, bad or doubtful.'

'PS You have made no reply to what I said as to the [ ] map you refused to deliver up which I consider quite unjustifiable and trust you will not for your own sake persist in it. The Board will bring it to issue, you may rest assured, and if you are under the necessity of delivering it, it will be unpleasant to your feelings and reputation.'

[18 February 1832]

Letter To Messrs Beck, Shearman & Co, Seedsmen, Strand, London, ordering clover and turnip seed for use on the Gosford estate in Co Cavan where Blacker was experimenting with his unorthodox 'green crop' system of farming. This consisted of cattle kept permanently indoors throughout the year and fed on clover, vetches, rape, turnips and rye grass, giving a ninefold increase in manure from each cow which had previously been grazed in summer on fallow ground recovering from a succession of grain crops. Such a system not only fully utilised an entire holding which previously had been left up to 50% fallow, but the additional manure enabled a tenant to endure twice as many potatoes and a 50% increase in grain crops, while the remainder provided green crops for animal feeding. By comparing this order with those of later years, the spread of this type of farming becomes apparent.\*

'Gentlemen, I am favoured with yours of 14th inst. You shall have the payment for the seeds punctually at Christmas. The small difference in the last remittance was occasioned by a mistake in the bank deducting the price of the stamp from my cheque for the amount of bill.

I was unlucky in ordering vetches for they are much cheaper in this country owing to the last dry summer. Be so good now by the first steam conveyance to ship eight hundred weight of best red clover and one hundred weight of white clover and half a hundred weight of white Globe turnip seed, half a hundred weight yellow Aberdeen turnip seed and half a hundred weight red Tops turnip seed. Desire that they may be kept at the agents in Dublin to be delivered to the order of Mr John Fyfe, Arvagh, county of Cavan who acts for me there and send a letter for him in the ship's letter bag to say that when he receives that letter receipts will be in Dublin and when they are shipped take the trouble to inform me the address of the agents and send bill of lading "loading" under cover to Earl of Gosford, Boodles Club, St James's Street, London, begging that no delay may take place as the season for sowing clover is fast advancing.

'There is no price made for clover here yet but I hope when there is that I shall find myself enabled to sell as cheap as anyone else which I really was not last season.'

25 February 1832

Letter To W C Quinn Esq, Secretary to the National Commissioners of Education, 12 St Stephen's Green, Dublin, suggesting that the Board should make a preliminary payment of £1,392 7s 0d to clear off rent arrears due to the former middleman Murray in order that Blacker could begin his management of the Dungannon Schoolands estate unencumbered. Murray wished to distrain the tenant's cattle and grain, which would have left many in a state of destitution from which they were unlikely to recover for some time. Blacker was unable to alienate local opinion and he was also restricted by the Insolvency Act which permitted tenants to name substitutes until debts were cleared. The rent arrears have accumulated as a result of the decline in the linen industry and unimproved methods of agriculture on the estate.

'In reply to yours of 1st inst I beg to mention that Mr Murray denies having any map belonging to the Board and has not accepted the offer made him subject to your approbation of the full payment of the arrears as far as there were assets and half a term's rent besides of those who had no effects. By a term is meant half a year's rent and therefore half a term is equivalent to 3 months rent.

'He has been executing a good many of his decrees and is now processing the remainder. The times are such that I consider it would be dangerous to turn out any number of tenants and it is very annoying to encourage the occupiers to take the benefit of the Insolvency Act by letting them name substitutes under the understanding that they would be admitted as tenants again when clear of their debts. The greater number say if they can get time they will be able to pay Mr Murray but that I apprehend is by applying to his payment what ought to go to the discharge of the accruing rent so that really the case is very embarrassing.

'Mr Murray speaks as if the Board were indebted to him. When he was formerly applied to for the map he did not deny having it. His present answer I suppose means to convey that it is his own property against which I have nothing to object except the date being long antecedent to the time his family had anything to say to the property.

'If the Board authorised me to say to those in arrear "Mr Murray has refused a fair offer from us for the arrears due to him according to the assets existing liable to his demand under which we would have taken the payment of the composition upon ourselves and have afforded you work and other assistance to have enabled you to have paid us the demand against you; in consequence of which rejection on his part we have determined not to admit of you continuing on tenants whilst everything you can earn is liable to be seized and sold under Mr Murray's decrees by which means we are prevented from any chance of having a respectable tenantry for years to come. Under these circumstances therefore there is nothing left to be done but to inform you that such people as now surrender their land and take the benefit of the Insolvent Act will be restored to their holding when they have been freed from their debts.'

'As I have said before I don't like the appearances of such a measure but I see no alternative unless you were to consult your lawyer and see whether it would not be in your power to compel him now on the expiration of his lease to put you in clear possession of the land which would throw the onus of turning out upon him, or that you remain quiescent and allow him to continue to harrass the people and reduce them to pauperism. I see little prospect of bringing the property into any satisfactory state for years in this latter case as people cannot pay rent if they have no stock and of course no manure.

'The arrear for 1830 and 1831 as returned by Mr Murray amounts to £1,750 12s 5d and the assets amount to according to the best calculation that can be made to £1,034 1s 7d. Since this calculation has been made Mr M[urray] has been seizing the property as far as his decrees go and he is now processing the remainder in order to decree them at next sessions. You are to observe that if the goods valued in the £1,034 (supposing the Board to compound) were sold it would leave a great number without cattle and the Board would have to grant them employment in draining and lend them lime in order to enable them to come round.

'There are now 80 or 100 acres I believe formerly bog which is let away so low that another year will leave it in a lake. It is therefore absolutely necessary that drains should be made to dry other parts of the bog and a road made to get into it as to let fuel be obtained there and interdict any more cutting in the place I have alluded to.

'Any offer from the Board ought to be upon the foot of Mr Murray's return of the arrear and anything received by him since ought to be in deduction from the Board's offer. If the property was mine I should offer the £1,034 Os 7d and £358 5s 5d being half the amount of the remainder of the arrears, Mr Murray to allow in deduction all he has since received and make over all his claims. But not knowing now the pecuniary means, if the Board are[?] I don't presume to say more than what I should do myself, it is pretty much the same as what I before stated...'

6 March 1832

Letter To J S Murray making proposals for a settlement of the rent arrears due him on the Dungannon Schoolands estate. Blacker's attempts to reach an agreement with Murray were in the interests of efficiency. He had no intention of siding with the tenantry against Murray who, he believed, had a lawful claim. It was only the amount of arrears to be advanced by the Education Board which was in dispute.

'I have waited some time in expectation of receiving from you the rental, a list of arrears from alone I can pretend to make any report to the Board upon the proposal you have made. The only alternative therefore left to me is to change the tenants until by taking advantage of the Insolvent Act they can relieve themselves from such debts as they have no property to pay but before having recourse to a measure which would have the appearance of countenancing people in evading a payment which might be justly due, I wish to repeat my offer of recommending to the Board to take upon themselves to secure you in the receipt of whatever may be the amount of the solvent arrears upon your assigning to them your claims on the tenantry and I would even go farther and recommend a percentage upon what appeared doubtful provided the reasonable information which I have required is afforded so that some investigation may be made.

'If you persist in refusing this I trust I shall be exonerated in the opinions of every thinking person, for taking the only course you have left me to pursue. I should wish to have your brother's address that I may send to him a duplicate of this and that there may be no mistake I have requested the bearer Mr McArthur to deliver this into your own hands.

28 January 1832

Letter To J S Murray Esq. Torron[?] Hill, Dungannon, concerning a settlement of the rent arrears due to him as middleman on the Dungannon Schoolands estate. The figure of £1,750 12s 4½d which Murray claims as arrears is apparently not the full total because in Blacker's evidence to the Devon Commission

'I am favoured with yours of 5th inst and am glad you have consented to give up the map required by the Board the date of which I think should satisfy you that it cannot belong to your family. I do not know what use it can be of hereafter to you but if it should I am confident you shall have the benefit of it's evidence with the greatest readiness.

'It has always been matter of great regret to me that it has not been in my power to bring about an amicable settlement between you and the Board but you surely cannot be surprised that the offer you made should not have been listened to for a moment. In the proposal I sent you I purposely referred the examination of the value of the assets to be determined by persons mutually appointed as I could not expect you to take for granted any estimate made by me but as you complain of this mode I now state that the nearest calculation I have been able to make is that the assets are equal to £1,034 1s 7d. You make the arrears on 27 January 1832 £1,750 12s 4½d from which deduct the value of assets and there remains a balance of £716 10s 9½d totally unprovided for as the assets take in securities and everything that is available to you [for?] payment.

'Now as you desire a specific proposal I am willing that you should be paid 5s in the £ upon the said £716 10s 9½d provided the Board will agree thereto. All payments you have since received to be deducted out of the £1,034 1s 7d and the remainder to be payable by the Board at January next and the composition to be payable the January following which is as soon as the Board can expect to receive it themselves. If this is satisfactory and that anything remains to be cleared up I would recommend a personal interview at Moy or Verner's Bridge.

'On this agreement being entered into I should require an assignment to the Board of all claims you may have against the tenantry and that you should undertake to prove their accuracy if disputed. I request your answer forthwith and beg to add that I cannot meet you until after Sunday next being engaged on the Grand Jury at Armagh.'

7 March 1832

Letter To William C Quinn Esq, Secretary to the National Commissioners of Education, 12 Stephen's Green, Dublin, with more detailed proposals for settlement of rent arrears on the Dungannon Schoolands estate. In preparing a 'Doomsday' survey of the state of the tenants on the estate Blacker employed McArthur, a land surveyor as well as Sweany.

'A few days ago I wrote to Mr McArthur, the surveyor, to return me a list of those tenants who could not pay their arrears with the expressed intention of sending their names for your approval of substituting others in their place, which I did with a view of its coming to Mr Murray's ears and producing some effect upon his measures and this morning I have a letter offering to give up the map which he had before refused and requesting that I should make him a distinct proposal in money of what I should be willing to recommend to the Board in reply to which I have stated that I should recommend the entire amount of the assets to be paid him next January deducting what money he may have received out of the arrears since furnishing them and that I should recommend 5s in the £ upon the uncovered residue of £716 10s 9½d to be paid the January after next. I know whatever is offered will not be met by an offhand approval and therefore I have said 5s in the £ but I would recommend 10s in the £ to get clear of the business and have the whole assigned over to you.'

7 March 1832

Letter To William C Quinn Esq, Secretary to the National Commissioners of Education, Dublin, concerning legal action against Murray the former middleman on the Dungannon Schoolands estate. Under the land laws Murray was deemed to be overholding on expiry of his lease in 1831 if he did not clear the holdings of his sub-tenants. Overholding carried a penal rent double of the rent agreed in the former lease and to avoid such a charge tenants installed by Murray had to be evicted and this was not only a costly but a dangerous procedure. Any leaseholder, on expiry of a lease could be accused of overholding if he did not pass all previous rights to the landlord, a situation which could arise even if only the lease and survey maps were retained.

Blacker continues to stress the importance of employing an agriculturalist and when the Board hesitates to engage another salaried official he proposes opening up new bogs for fuel to meet the expense; this would also have the beneficial effect of stopping turf cutting on the old bogs and preserving them for reclamation.

'Since your last Mr Murray has been at the Omagh assizes and I am therefore unable to say what effect your official letter may have on him but he has proposed meeting me on Tuesday next at Verner's Bridge and perhaps I may be able to get something arranged with him which is greatly to be desired.

'In the meantime I should wish much that you would furnish me with the opinion of counsel whether he is not obliged to give you up the total and absolute possession of all and every part and parcel of the estate and that he must be considered as an overholding tenant until he does so, and whether an overholding tenant is not liable to double rent until he does give up the full possession as required.

'I am not sensible of having exercised any jurisdiction that can in any way interfere with this question. There has been nothing done but ordering a survey. I have not even answered a petition or exercised any ownership of any kind. It would be most material that I should know the law of the case in this matter before I meet Mr Murray as it would place him in a very awkward situation if he was subject to a penal rent.

'You have not taken notice of what I stated as to the necessity of opening up new bog and turning that which has been hitherto in use into arable. In this respect I wish to mention to you that as this bog forms no part of the rental of the property, whatever I can make it yield will I think be more than sufficient to pay the expense of the outlay and any overplus that may arise is all that can fairly be claimed by any person or persons who may be entitled to the produce of the property.

'Now it is evident that to carry into effect the making new roads, drains and cuts between each lot and seeing that the turf are cut properly will require a superior and a confidential man to superintend the work daily. Now if the Board would allow me to get an agriculturalist from Scotland according to the plan I am acting on in other estates he would be able to do all and make the estate in the course of two or three years wear quite a different appearance and the extra expense between his wages and that of a common bog bailiff would not be more than something about £18 or £20 and would be nothing at all more than the wages of any respectable overseer who could only do the one thing of seeing the work done.

'The first year of new bog the rent is very trifling on account of the tenant having to level the surface and prepare it for the spreading of the turf. Still I think the rent I shall be able to make out of the bogs would cover salary and all expenses and leave some overplus and I should think that overplus ought to satisfy the persons entitled to the rents. The country people are now anxious to make preparations for cutting and I trust you will be able to send me an authority to make a commencement and to look out for a person as an agriculturalist under whom they may learn how to manage their land of which they are completely ignorant. If this can be done the Board will derive great benefit when it comes into their own possession.'

'PS I shall be able to get your letter in Armagh on Tuesday morning before I go to meet Mr Murray and if your answer is delayed direct there.'

15 March [1832].

Letter To J S Murray Esq, Dungannon, discussing the implications of applying legal pressure on Murray for overholding after the expiration of his lease. Murray could have been compelled to evict every sub-tenant on the estate and this was not a prospect that he could face with equanimity. Even if a sufficient military force had been available it would have been impossible to find new tenants to take up the vacant holdings and Murray, who resided in Dungannon would have been in some personal danger.

'After the correspondence that has passed I am in hopes that we shall be able to make some arrangement on fair terms for I perceive there will be a bad feeling grow on before all is over if the matter continues to be agitated much longer.

'I am given to understand the Board may if they choose require you to give them up the possession of every acre and force you to turn out every individual that is on it, until which is done you would be an overholding tenant and liable to a penal rent of double the actual value.

'I am sure your under-tenants would not give up the possession unless they were forced to it and altogether, I for my part, foresee nothing but what will be unpleasant to all parties if the offer I have made is not accepted as I see plainly the Board are getting out of temper.'

'PS Please bring my letter with you in case any reference should be necessary as I need not bring my letter book. On reading this over I see I have forgot to fix on Tuesday next at 1 o'clock to meet you at the Inn at Verner's Bridge. I shall be there to the moment and beg you will be punctual and bring in your gig the map you have said you would deliver up.'

15 March 1832.

Letter To George Robinson Esq, Knappa[gh] Armagh, apparently a holder of one of the many perpetuity leases on the Graham estate recently acquired by Lord Gosford. Covenants in leases concerning turf cutting or grazing rights often give rise to dispute; they were either ignored in the passage of time or some advantage was being taken by a large tenant upon a change of management of an estate. Blacker's approach is conciliatory and he suggests that the matter be left to the arbitration of friends which was the common practice in the countryside.

'Since I seen you I have referred to the original of your lease in the latter part of which you will see a provision that the fuel required for consumption on the premises shall be from the upper moss of Outlick which is distinguished from the other moss over and against the demised premises and you will see that if the claim you allude to of a right of grazing was attempted to be turned into a source of annoyance that there is ample scope given to return it, every man having a right to graze his horses upon your entire holding when drawing his turf.

'I hope my mentioning this will not be considered as in the slightest degree manifesting the slightest intention of giving you any annoyance whatever but I beg of you to consider when the bog is specially reserved, when the upper bog which I claim is specially distinguished from the rest by your lease and when the increase measurement shows[?] that said bog has been encroached upon and is now occupied by your tenants, I say I beg of you under such circumstances to consider how far you are right and see if it was left to yourself in retaining possession of the extra measure and still more how you are justifiable in refusing to leave a question of such a nature to the decision of friends. I cannot help thinking that if you show your original lease to Mr Johnston that he will be of opinion you ought to submit it to arbitration and you may either have surveyors or friends just as you like.'

16 March 1832.

Annotated 'address in England 1 Wyndham Place, Plymouth, 16 December [18]39'.

Letter To W C Quinn Esq, Secretary to the National Commissioners of Education, 12 St Stephen's Green, Dublin, giving details of the settlement with Murray, the former middleman on the Dungannon Schoolands estate. Murray finally agreed to accept £1,500 leaving Blacker with over £600 for improvements which was spent on drainage and roads.

Murray was brought to a settlement by the pressure of local opinion; 'having satisfied the priest ... he recommended all the tenants to follow my directions'.

Blacker immediately proposed to improve cultivation on holdings by lending seeds and deferring payment until harvest time. Blacker imported seeds for all the estates under his care and as a bulk buyer was usually able to get the lowest wholesale price although his bargaining position was weakened by his need for as much as 9 months credit.

'I am favoured with yours of the 16th and have since had an interview with Mr Murray at Verner's Bridge and annexed you have copy of a memorandum handed me by him at the conclusion of our meeting.

'You will recollect that the valuation of the assets was £1,034 but on speaking to the person who made it I find he was allowing some of the grain to remain for seed and did not bring it into account which in strictness it ought to be. Therefore we may estimate it at £100 which is £400 short of Mr Murray's present demand which being accepted of, he would assign over to you his claims and securities for the arrear of 1830 and 1831 amounting to £1,750 and also his claims for prior arrears which amount to about £450 more, as he originally stated the entire arrear at £2,200.

'When the sums recovered since the 27th January (the date of the arrear list) and the rent due by the Dean are deducted from the £1,500 he estimated that the quarterly payments would amount to about £200 each. You can therefore lay the state of the case fully before the Board and I should be glad to have their decision with the least possible delay. There seems to be something in favour of Mr Murray in this proposal beyond the assets and half term's rent which I first proposed, but delay is very prejudicial and although I think if the Board were firm that Mr Murray would find himself obliged to accede to their terms, yet under all their circumstances I am rather inclined to recommend that the proposal should be closed with and get the matter finally settled under the understanding that Mr Murray must be answerable to prove the correctness of the arrear list and that he should give every assistance in his power to clearing up any difficulties that might arise in which I should have occasion to refer to him.

'Mr Murray never would have been brought to the present terms had he not seen that such measures had been taken that we were quite independent of him. He calculated that I could not get on without his rental which he has always kept back and the business of finding substitutes has made such a noise that he was incurring great odium, as I explained to the people that I was driven to it by his unreasonable demands, and having satisfied the priest of this he recommended all the tenants to follow my directions.

'I have very little doubt by slow degrees to get in the amount of the year 1830 and 1831 arrears in money or work and perhaps the greater part of the other.

'I have fixed with a competent person to undertake the land bailiff and bog bailiff business together which I believe was before £10 each and some perquisite of bog timber which I withdraw and by giving the one man £21 without any perquisites I can get a person qualified to oversee the roads and drains required and to give some information in the raising of green crops until I can get permission to look out in Scotland for a person with higher qualifications.

'The Board will see that where there is an overplus of near £700 of old arrears to receive in labour there must be some confidential man to oversee the outlay.

'Supposing this was all settled I should further beg of the Board to allow me to lend seeds to such as I found had land suitable for a great number are in a state of utter destitution and if it was not that the estate requires an immense quantity of labour which will enable me to employ them, they would have to be turned out to beggary.

There is another subject which requires consideration that is the subject of tithes. If the Board would take the payment upon themselves I could now lay it on the land in the shape of rent which would be a very desirable thing. An I ought to have some discretionary powers in making bargains for reclaimable land. It will be attended with great inconvenience and embarrassment if this cannot be confided to me with the assistance of a sworn valuator (for I make it a rule never to value lands myself).

'It will be necessary, I daresay, in a variety of cases to remove people holding small patches of 1, 2 or 3 acres entirely from where they are and give them a larger portion of reclaimable [land] elsewhere and put their old places into the farms of those adjoining and unless I can tell them at once what they have to rely upon, my proceedings will be greatly embarrassed.

'I don't recommend that any leases should be given until the tenant has complied with the instructions for house feeding which will take (in all the reclaimable land) some years to accomplish so that the Board will have plenty of time to investigate any arrangements I have made before they are finally bound by them.

'I have got the old map from Mr Murray and have had a meeting with Mr Sweany who had previously refused to abide by Mr Griffith's decision as to the disputed mearing. He has however now consented to write to Mr Annesley and recommend it to him. Upon reading this over I find it necessary to observe that I have not taken the liberty of fixing positively with the person I mention as bailiff and overseers. It is merely arranged subject to the approval of the Board...'

'PS I should inform you that several people have already began to bake[?] in the cut out bog I formerly alluded to as being cut low enough. I can do nothing for fear of exercising an ownership and it would be very difficult to prevent unless new ground was allotted so that something must be done in this respect instantly.

'I have thought it best to send an extract from my Letter To you to Mr Murray in order to commit him to the particulars stated as to the arrears in which his proposal is deficient by which means he will be bound if he don't object.'

21 March 1832

Memorandum

'The Board to allow Dean Murray for arrears due him out of Schoolands £1,500. The money he owes the Board and what has been received since the return was made to Mr Blacker to be deducted from that sum and the balance to be paid as follows:

¼ on 1st January 1833

¼ on 1st July 1833

¼ on 1st January 1834

¼ on 1st July 1834

Letter To John S Murray Esq, Torren[?] Hill, Dungannon, enclosing an extract from Blacker's Letter To the Board of Education concerning the proposed settlement. Marked 'private'.

'As I wish to deal openly with you and everyone else I beg to annex an extract from my Letter To the Board relative to your proposal by which you will see that I have rather advised closing with your proposal. If I have mis-stated anything I should be glad you would let me know that I may lose no time in setting myself right with them. I mark this private not that I have anything to conceal but that there is no use in talking about matters of this kind.'

21 March 1832

Extract from letter No 13 from the beginning to the paragraph ending ... 'I should have occasion to refer to him.'

Letter To John S Murray Esq, asking for observations on the character and solvency of the tenants.

'I have been for some time from home or would sooner have replied to your letter of 5th inst. You mention your brother agrees to our arrangement by which I understand the proposition handed you from the Board. Will you have the goodness to let me know how soon you will be able to have the accounts all made out as I am anxious to see how the tenants now stand. As you are so well acquainted with them all, I wish you would affix some observations as to character and solvency.'

20 April 1832

Letter To William C Quinn Esq, Secretary to the National Commissioners of Education, asking for legal advice on the precise method of approach to be adopted with the occupying tenants on the Dungannon Schoolands estate. Blacker had a good working knowledge of the law in the relationship between landlord and tenant but relied on guidance in the finer points of law. The Schooland tenants were mostly sub-tenants introduced by the previous leaseholder and as such had no legal standing. Blacker preferred not to serve notices-to-quit in case a status of tenant at will was established before the Board decided whether to grant leases or not, presumably as any change or apparent change from a position of sub-tenant entitled the occupier to a claim for tenant right which in itself was a bar to ejectment. Ultimately all tenants on this estate were recognised as tenants at will and the notice to quit became the standard procedure by which management retained the right to serve ejectments which were seldom, if ever, carried to a conclusion.

'I was sorry to find you were unwell when I called to hear the determination of the Board on the subject of my letter. I am anxious you would get me precise instructions how I ought to proceed with regard to the occupying tenants so as to keep the power of dispossessing them if I find occasion so to do and I fancy you will have to refer to your solicitor whether I should now serve them generally with a six month notice to quit or not.

'I am not sure but that such a proceeding would acknowledge them as tenants at will and as the season has been so far spent that no arrangements can be made to take place at present I should be anxious to have legal advice how I ought to proceed. My own opinion is that no notice to quit is necessary if the arrangements for the present season is agreed upon in a proper form of words and as there is a nicety in the matter perhaps it is better that I should have some directions on the subject from your law agent to whom it will be necessary to state that the lands were let by lease to Mr Murray which terminated at last November and the object is to preserve the power of turning out the present occupiers hereafter if it should be found necessary letting them remain until November in their present holdings for which a form of agreement is required so as not to make them a yearly tenant. There is no time to lose as May is so near when notices must be served if they are required.'

20 April 1832

Letter To G F Brooke Esq, accepting a proposal to pay interest at 5% on an unpaid bill for the time being. In 1832 the economy of the North was suffering from a recession caused by a combination of low grain prices and low prices for domestic linen.

'I have received from Lord Gosford your application with directions if I cannot conveniently pay your account to take advantage of your proposal of paying interest until I could and I must accordingly let it remain on that footing from the 1st instant which I hope will be satisfactory to you.'

25 April 1832.

Letter To J S Murray Esq, Torren[?] Hill, Dungannon, complaining of delay in forwarding his account of rent arrears on the Dungannon Schoolands estate. He asks for reply by return and 'that you will say when your arrear list will be ready, if you have not already prepared it.'

4 May 1832

Letter To Mr W Law, Arvagh, [Co Cavan?], concerning the settlement of an account for building a police station on the Gosford estate in Co Cavan. As is apparent (18) the chronic shortage of revenue precluded the payment of any money to Law although he was later given the contract to carry out the construction work.

'Mr Mitchell has shown me your letter of 29th April. The contract will have to be drawn out upon a stamp in a regular manner and a penalty attached to its non-fulfilment and your letter not entering very particularly into the matter I did not wish to buy stamps until I knew decidedly whether you were able and willing to execute it for I believe you are aware that I cannot afford you any payment until Mr Mitchell receives the rent in the latter end of the year.

'You were formerly content to lose some money by the job but this I don't think fair and am willing to allow you what the architect here says will give you a fair remuneration for your expense and trouble. When everything is completely understood I shall go up myself and bring the architect with me to lay off the building. Will you tell Mr Fyfe.'

8 May 1832

Letter To William C Quinn, Secretary to the National Commissioners of Education, describing the state of the Dungannon Schoolands estate, the improvements that had been started and the extent to which the work was handicapped by the lack of an agriculturalist. The burning of weeds or turf was used as a substitute for manure. The ashes provided sufficient nutrients to raise one crop but a repetition of this practice led to impoverishment of the soil which farmyard manure alone could restore. Blacker constantly stressed that rents should depend on the produce of the soil rather than on incidentals such as the cotton linen industry.

'After waiting a considerable time I ventured to express my surprise at Mr Murray's dalay in not sending me the list of arrears to which he replied by saying Mrs Murray had been dangerously ill and that he had been thereby prevented. I find she still continues in a dangerous state but so long a period having elapsed it seems to me scarcely to be a satisfactory apology for delaying a document which a single day or a few hours ought to suffice to make out. I have no great confidence in any of the parties and therefore I hope that you have got the assignment drawn in the fullest manner and executed. If not I beg to press it most particularly upon your attention as a matter of very great importance.

'I went over the estate from one end to the other yesterday. The ground is impoverished and full of weeds and the tenants have no idea of the advantage of recovering them, or how to set about it. Neither have they any idea of the advantage of turnips, rape, etc, nor the slightest notion of what they are or how they are cultivated.

'I am quite confident that I am within the mark in saying that if the Board had consented to my application for leave to bring over an agriculturalist to instruct them, the tenantry would have been in this one season nearly £1,000 the richer for it. I saw yesterday more than 100 acres of land which only required to be [ ] and burned to produce turnips worth £12 to £15 per acre which are not how yielding 15d per acre. They might still be prepared in time for rape and yield a great abundance of spring feeding when the cattle in general are half-starved and I most strongly recommend it again to the consideration of the Board. The income of the property mainly depends upon it for this land remains in their eyes almost valueless because they don't know what it will produce but if they had experience of what could be done with it I should find no difficulty in getting it set at a fair price. I beg of you to let me have the earliest reply upon this subject.

'I heard from many that the clover seed given out was growing exceedingly well but the giving out of the seed and attending to setting the turf bog which all came on together was quite as much as the man I had appointed and his assistant could attend to. This you will be sensible of when I tell you there are already above 500 lots of turf bog set, scattered over a space of 3 or 4 square miles which require constant watching.

'Mr McArthur, the surveyor, therefore I got to set the men to work on the drains and owing to a great deal of time and attention bestowed upon them on his part, a great many difficulties have been overcome and some symptons of combination to resist working up the arrears has been got the better of. As far as they extend they are producing the greatest effect and I walked dry over places where a few weeks ago no one could have stood. I am quite confident the annual income produced by the drainage will be equal to the entire cost.

'Before I left Dublin some time ago I called on the Board of Works and got a letter from them to their engineer to examine with me into the facts of the petition I showed you. I have since seen the engineer and have ascertained the facts are correct and hope in a few days to forward you his certificate to that effect. If the Board of Works comply the estate will be very much benefited indeed.

'I thought it might be satisfactory to the Board to hear how matters were going on. I hope you will not forget to mention what I have said as to the loss arising both to them and the tenants from not having an agriculturalist to instruct. The Primate can readily inform himself whether the plan succeeds and if it does not fulfil the expectations I have given ground for he can be discharged at any time.'

24 May 1832

Letter To Messrs Ball & Co, Dublin, ordering payment of £49 7s to Major Stewart on order, being the balance of the rent of the small Dooish estate for which Blacker acted as agent (in later years Blacker appears to have acquired the property for himself on a perpetuity lease). This property contains some leases with semi-feudal covenants and duties still attached which Lord Castlestewart was prepared to forego in return for an appropriate sum of money (22). 4 June 1832

Letter To Major Stewart, Kingstown, referring to a difficulty with Lord Castlestewart over duties and labour services on the Dooish estate.

'I think this is about the time that your insurance becomes due and I therefore send you above (21) draft per the year's rent due at May last deducting Hugh Dougan's note for old arrears £2 2s and Owen McCavery's for £1 3s 3½d who are not now tenants of the lands nor have not been for several years past.

'I find there are 5 or 6 disputes their new arrears. I have sent them to Mr Sproule and do not trouble you with them at present. I wrote to Mr S[proule] when I was at Drumquin a few days ago to mention some of the parties in the old notes being off the land but he did not reply or take any notice of my letter though sent by a special messenger.

'I have a good deal of trouble with Lord Castlestewart who insists in breaking up the arrangement hitherto subsisting for the duties payable in the old grant and I am now obliged with the others to join in buying a 3 year old bullock and sending him to Stewartstown and give 20 days labour or else submit to a most extravagant charge near half the rent. I don't know whether I have any claim on you for this. I rather imagine I have not...'

'PS Mr Dobbin assured me he had Mr Corbett's receipt for the counterpart of the lease which satisfied me that all was right. I called on Mr Corbett and told him so.'

4 June 1832

Letter To William C Quinn, Secretary to the National Commissioners of Education in which Blacker states in detail his plans for the improvement of the Dungannon Schoolands estate and reiterates again and again the advantages of having a professional agriculturalist resident on the estate.

'My object was to have got an assignment of all arrears generally and left the Mr Murrays time to make out the list by which means we might have it in our power before paying the last of the money to question the Mr Murrays as to what they had received whether it might be due on the bog or the arable land. As the arrangement that has been entered into is merely by letter and not having any great confidence in the parties I have been for a considerable time uneasy for fear there might be some loophole to give trouble by. I wrote again to Mr Murray of Dungannon saying I did not like to press the matter under the circumstances he had stated but as the thing might be done by a clerk and in an hour or two I could not see sufficient cause for such a delay but I have received no answer.

'You have omitted to allude to my representation for a change in the time of settling the rents left with you when I was in Dublin which would be of very great importance to the welfare of the tenantry in their present circumstances. In a few years I should hope they would be in a state to meet the wishes of the Board at any time.

'With regard to the idea of giving a farm of unimproved land to a farmer of acknowledged skill as a remuneration for instructions given to the rest of the tenantry, you may recollect I formerly mentioned that idea but the more I consider it the more I am convinced there is no place so good as at once hiring a suitable person which would be the best and I think the cheapest and I would wish to direct the attention of the Board to these points, that a man of skill is not always a man of capital and it will require capital to build a house and engage in the reclaiming of land.

Second if he has a farm sufficiently large to be a suitable remuneration he will have his own business to attend to and will not be likely to neglect that to go and instruct others.

Thirdly if he does not turn out according to expectation you cannot dismiss him with the same facility you would a hired servant.

Fourthly I have no doubt of getting the land fully occupied and soon improved under the permission you have given me to lend lime and seeds if you will add the assistance of the instructor and the land which would be given to a farmer when cultivated will do more than pay the salary.

'The plan of improvement which I propose is of the simplest nature and may all be summed up in the two points of house feeding the cattle and not allowing two grain crops to come in succession. The first ensures the growth of green crops by which ¼ the land now applied to feeding cattle will support the same number and affords manure to bring the ground so saved (which is generally unproductive pasture to the extent of near 1/3 of the farm) into profitable crops by which means the tenant will have more than double the produce from his farm and the land will always be kept in heart. The risk in making the advances necessary I consider nothing; the lime and seeds are laid out on the land and its improvement by the cultivation which results from the lime increases the price of the farm tenfold the outlay so that the person in possession has every year a greater interest in remaining on the farm. There is therefore not the slightest fear of his running away and as I would grant no lease until the house feeding is completely carried into effect you have it in your favour to turn out the person whenever you choose and lay hold upon all the fruits of his labour. I have had full experience of the plan as I have been acting upon it in Lord Gosford and Col Close's estate in which I am sure I have above 1,500 tenants in the different stages of getting into the plan as fast as the nature of their circumstances will enable them.

'There are at least 100 acres of clover sowed in the Schoolands this season and great numbers are trying experiments of mangelworzel turnips and rape which I expect to see next year largely cultivated but they have not an idea of cleaning land nor the use of farming implements in the latter of which they would also require to have patterns to copy from.

'I have no doubt you must be aware that the misery and wretchedness of the lands in question is really a proverb in the neighbourhood but I have not the least doubt of having it one of the most thriving properties under the Board if my recommendations are followed. If the improvement I promise is not evident and progressive the fact can be easily ascertained by the Primate and the whole matter may be forthwith ended by the discharge of the agriculturalist and the lime and seeds being in the land are ample security for themselves.

'There are no building or fixtures of any kind to be got rid of and about £35 annually will be the expense of the instruction. The place is detailed more at large in a small pamphlet of which I sent a few copies formerly to Mr Fetherston but to convince the understanding is useless without lending lime as manure to bring the practice within their reach and instructions to show them how to set about it. I can hear of no competent person in the neighbourhood and imagine I should have to apply to a friend in Scotland who has already sent me over two who have turned out very well. ...'

'PS The Committee of the Stewartstown Dispensary has applied to me for a subscription from the Board and I have been also applied to by two schoolmasters one of whom I believe received something from the Dean of Ardagh. I referred them to the clergyman for a recommendation.'

7 June 1832

Letter To William C Quinn Esq, Secretary to the National Commissioners of Education concerning a boundary dispute between the Dungannon Schoolands and the Manor Annesley estate. Arbitration was to be left to Richard Griffith, best known as the official responsible for the second general valuation of Ireland c.1859. Blacker repeats his plea for the appointment of an agriculturalist and comments on the beneficial effects as seen during his recent visit to Lord Gosford's Cavan estate.

'I have heard from Mr Sweany saying he was now willing on the part of Mr Annesley to submit to the decision of Mr Griffith in regard to the boundary line between the Schoolands and Manor Annesley's estate. Mr Griffith is expected to return to Ireland next month so that I think it is well not to have recourse to any hostile measures in the interim but I submit to you whether it might not be well to have some deed of submission executed so as to ensure respect to Mr G[riffith]'s decision. You will recollect that the Board formerly expressed themselves satisfied that this gentleman should decide. Mr Sweany's arguments are all founded upon having been in possession and I understand there is an Act of his late Majesty in force putting the Commissioners of Education upon the same footing as Church and King in that no possession for any length of time should be valid against them. It will be of use if such an Act is in force that I should have a copy of it sent to me in order that I may have it to produce.

'I am anxious to have the Board's determination as to an agriculturalist. I am just returned from a visit to Lord Gosford's Cavan estate where I have one established and the more I see of it the more I am satisfied of the utility of the plan.

'PS I find by a letter from Mr Murray that he has lost his wife and he now promises to make out the list of arrears.'

16 June 1832

Letter To Henry R Paine Esq, Secretary to the Board of Works, Custom House, Dublin, concerning the building of four bridges over a drainage ditch to enable tenants on the Dungannon Schoolands estate to have access to their holdings. This entire area was subject to annual flooding from Lough Neagh. The canal cut to Coalisland had, in some measure, prevented flood water from draining freely and to alleviate this the Navigation Board had constructed the drainage ditch.

'I waited upon Mr Richardson and agreed upon certain facts which he promised to report and sent me a copy which I have accordingly received from him this morning and the only omission which I can perceive is that there had been a demand formerly made of four bridges but one only being granted by you the three lessees would not accept of it and when you consider that before this drain was made everyone could get without obstruction a passage out through his own land you will at once perceive that four bridges to be made in an extent of 1¾ miles was not an unreasonable request and in point of fact if only one was built there would be no possibility of getting from it to the premises occupied by so many people. I trust therefore the Board of Works will in this respect see the necessity of study in a fair degree the accommodation of those who have been insulated by the making of the drain in question.

'In regard to other matters I do not wish to make any demand that is not sanctioned by the report of Mr Richardson and I trust you will have the goodness to restore the privilege of getting their hay from the off side of the canal free of lockage and that you will have the goodness to order the drain to be restored to its original dimensions without loss of time as if the present season is allowed to pass it will be impossible to get the work accomplished before winter.

'I do not think it necessary to trouble the Board of Education by making it the channel of communication with you hoping there will be no objection to the present application. I shall be much obliged to you to let me know the determination of the Board of Works at your earliest convenience.'

'PS I hope you will not have forgot that I had the pleasure of speaking to you and also Mr Ottley and Mr Radcliffe on the business not long since.'

19 June 1832

Letter To Mr Alexander Dobbin, Cranfield, Randalstown, refusing to grant anything more than the normal 21 year lease for an agricultural holding or a perpetuity lease for any building. Blacker points out that he may easily in a little time 'pick up farms from people going to America'.

'I am quite decided not to give any more than the usual lease of any land you may require and to allow only such a portion of the farm as may reasonably be apportioned to that part of the fall[?]. I have not any objection to grant a perpetuity to you of any buildings you may require if they are of such a character as to deserve it or to give 61 or 91 years for smaller outlays but I can do nothing more.

'You may easily in the course of a little time pick up farms from people going to America etc so as to give you land enough...'

23 June 1832

Letter To Henry R Paine Esq, Secretary to the Board of Public Works, Dublin, pointing out that part of the Dungannon Schoolands estate had been taken for the building of the drainage canal without any compensation and that before the creation of the canal the bed of the River Torrens provided ready drainage for the estate and that the Navigation Board must thus compensate the proprietors of the land for all damages.

'I am favoured with your letter of 20th and am glad to see the toll on hay is to be taken off but I must protest against the Board of Education being called upon to bear one half of the expense of building a bridge over the back drain and clearing it out as being wholly unreasonable. It appears by the investigation which has been made that the Schoolands have been taken possession of for the formation of the canal without any compensation having been made and the least that can be expected is that the inhabitants should be protected from injury.

'Before the formation of the canal the bed of the river [Torrens] afforded a ready passage for the water and gave every facility for the draining of their lands but by making the canal (the banks of which are I should think 8 or 10 ft above that level) all passage to the river was cut off and it therefore became necessary to make what is called the back drain to carry off the water thus obstructed both to prevent injury to the tenants of the adjoining lands and injury to the canal itself.

'It appears to me quite indisputable that the proprietors of the canal are bound to indemnify the proprietors of the land for any damage that might arise and therefore it was I conclude that this drain was made entirely by the Navigation Board of the day and the same principle which made them feel it necessary originally to make it must still bind them to keep it in a state of efficiency which seems to be quite conclusive against the Board of Education having to pay any part of the outlay required at present for that purpose.

'Upon the same principle I contend that if the Navigation Board make a drain of this kind (which the report of their own officer states was absolutely necessary for the safety of the canal itself) through the farms of the Schooland tenants, they are called upon in reason to afford them some means to get across it and when I state the length of this drain to be nearly two miles it surely cannot be said that four small bridges are more than requisite or that it is unreasonable to expect the Board of Works should make at their own expense what their own doings have made necessary. I am sure these matters only require to be clearly stated to be complied with for it is impossible to defend the refusal by any fair reasoning whatever and therefore confidently relying upon the sense of justice of the Board of Works I forebear at present to state their proposition to the Commissioners of Education and conclude by submitting for their consideration that the sum necessary for clearing the back drain is of very trifling amount and the injury which will attend the delay of the work which can only be done in summer, must be most serious...'

25 June 1832

Letter To John Cornwall, Esq, Granby Row, Dublin, concerning the rate of interest on a loan payable to his brother, Rev Samuel Blacker, Rector of Mullabrack.

'I am favoured with yours of 23rd inst. The sum you have inserted as payable to my brother is the amount formerly paid during my agency but you will recollect he gave you notice that he would require 5½% concealing himself to be as well entitled to that rate as Col Munro and more particularly as he is receiving 6% from Lord Glougall[?]. The interest therefore due him the 1st February is £100 10s 6d and to Col Munro the 9th February on Miss Ball's is £27 18s 6d.

'I have not received my account from the bank have sent for it and shall return you the difference. Mr Godley will receive his own interest arising from Brodegan's judgement transferred...'

26 June [1832]

Letter To Henry R Paine Esq, Secretary to the Board of Works, Custom House, Dublin, concerning the erection of bridges over the drainage canal to facilitate tenants on the Dungannon Schoolands estate.

'I have had the pleasure to receive your letter of yesterday and am thankful to the Board for giving up the point as to cleaning out the drain and hope you will have the goodness to direct the work to be done during the present dry season which will save great expense hereafter as the banks will become firm before the rainy season and will not so readily slip in.

'With regard to the bridges across it I would beg to point out to your consideration that the one bridge was long since ordered to be made but Mr Murray would not accept of it or fix the ground for it to be built on conceiving he had a right to as many as would afford reasonable communication. When he found his lease would not be renewed the matter was dropped.

'I feel exceedingly obliged by the readiness with which you have acceded to my applications on being convinced of their propriety and I should be most unwilling to appear to you in the light of an unreasonable or even an importunate claimant and as you seem to consider that no foundation could be had except at the one place if you will allow me to require Mr Richardson to accompany me along the course of the drain I think we will be able to make some arrangement that may serve the purpose without entailing upon you an unnecessary expenses but I trust that you will order the one bridge to be proceeded in immediately at the place where Mr Richardson points out the foundation to be suitable...'

'PS What I have in view in requesting Mr Richardson to accompany me in that it occurs to me that in some situations wooden bridges might be made at very little expense which would perhaps answer and as the Commissioners of Education would not I think be induced to charge for any oak timber that might be found in the bog to be used in that way I think the matter might be accommodated without any great outlay in a very permanent and effectual manner. There is no doubt what you say as to the utility of the canal is quite true as regards the public but I am rather inclined to think it has hitherto been of very extensive injury to the Schoolands from the back water occasioned by it and cutting off the communications between one part of the tenant's holdings and the other but this can't now be helped and we must only attend to what is reasonable under the existing circumstances.'

[The bog oak referred to for bridge building was a feature of the bogs on the west of Lough Neagh. Tenants were sometimes permitted to use this wood for building but it was more usual to prohibit its use as raising it from the bogs destroyed much turf that would otherwise have been available for fuel, a loss to estate revenue.]

28 June 1832

Letter To John Little Esq, Stewartstown arising from Lord Castlestewart's demand that certain labour services described in old leases should be paid for in money. The system of duty work (the French ) to which tenants were liable was rather inflexible and subject to abuse; for example the work days could be provided in winter or at a time when little work was required.

'You may rely upon the bullock being sent you as I have written again about it. In regard to what you say that you cannot advise Lord Castlestewart to fulfil the condition to which he is bound by the lease I have only to observe that I have the opinion of counsel on the subject which is that the clauses of the lease are as binding on him as they are on me and I cannot see the justice of your refusing to fulfil what you are pledged to as clearly as words can make it.

'I consider I have been unhandsomely treated by Lord Castlestewart attempting to break an arrangement made many years before he got the property, to which arrangement it was liable in my mind [ ] it descended to him and after subsisting 70 years to be set aside for the paltry consideration of a few shillings annually.

'I have no wish however to put him to any trouble for the sake of enforcing a stipulation which time has made valuable to me and if you are willing to let the old arrangement remain I shall not take any further notice of the attempt to break it.

'If you are not I request to know what time you require to give me a definitive answer whether you will or will not fulfil your part of the lease and I shall then feel myself at full liberty to take such steps as may appear necessary to enforce my right. I write in haste and have only to hope that neither you or Lord Castlestewart will consider me guilty of any personal disrespect by my determination to enforce my rights.'

9 July 1832

Letter To Henry Ross Lewin Esq, Killeshandra, Co Cavan, concerning provision of a police station on the Gosford estate.

'I am favoured with yours of 14th. The accommodation I proposed was four rooms, two below and two above with an extra room for sergeant. This goes by the architect who is going to lay out the foundations, who will put it into the nearest post office that you may have an opportunity of seeing him during the day he will be in Arvagh in case you should wish it.

'The accommodations would be excellent for two married men and two single [ ] and the large room below for the sergeant or the small room below and small bedroom above for him and the other for the married men. Then the two single men would have a good bedroom above and a good sitting room below. As you are reducing the number of married men perhaps this would do. If so I should be glad to hear form you.]

18 July 1832

Letter To Henry Ross Lewin Esq, Killeshandra, Co. Cavan, concerning provision of a police station at Arvagh on the Gosford estate in Co. Cavan.

'I have been consulting with the architect and find it would be impossible for me to furnish proper accommodations for the police on the terms you mention. They should have an enclosed yard and lock-up house and I would not wish to have anything to say to the matter unless it was done as it ought to be. I don't wish to make money by it but I should not like to be out of pocket. I assure you a place which I could afford at £24 which I think would combine comfort and security; the sergeant's room would overlook the gateway and everything be under his eye.' 18 July 1832

Letter To William C Quinn, Esq, Secretary to the National Commissioners of Education, 12 Stephen's Green, Dublin, emphasising that the tenants on the Dungannon Schoolands estate must be granted free passage for their crops along the canal until a bridge or bridges are provided by the Board of Works. There is a reference to Richard Griffith coming to settle a boundary dispute with the Manor Annesley estate.

'I have just had a letter from Mr Sweaney of Gardiner's Place, [Dublin], agent to Mr Annesley, saying that Mr Griffith had arrived and that he would be ready to determine the question of the boundary referred to him in about 10 or 14 days. As he does not mention having had any communication with the solicitors to the Board I think it best to let you know of it. I am not myself much afraid of Mr Sweaney's refusing to abide by the award whatever it may be and if he entered into the submission for his employer I think it would be sufficient.

'I have not heard of any regular assignment being made of the arrears but as the people are aware of the arrangement and letters in confirmation of the settlement have passed I don't apprehend any difficulty and am going on with the draining in a way which will soon change the entire face of the bog and enable me to increase the setting of turf lots and also bring in a large portion of reclaimable land. A cart can now travel where a dog could scarcely have crossed three months ago.

I have detained by corresponding with the Board of Works an order to have the back drain cleared out to have an entrance for the boundary stream into the canal with a sluice[?] and to have boats with hay from the meadows on the off side of the canal to pass the locks free but they have declined to allow four bridges to be made across the back drain so as to give the inhabitants access to the road made on the bank of the canal. The back drain having been made for the preservation of the canal it follows I think, in justice, that the Board of Works should give a convenient passage across it but they have not replied to my last letter and I must therefore resign a further correspondence on the subject to you, this point only remaining to be dismissed. I beg you to keep in mind the altering of the time of accounting.' 20 July 1832

Letter To William C Quinn Esq, Secretary to the National Commissioners of Education, explaining how he had taken the initiative and appointed an agriculturalist for the Dungannon Schoolands estate without express permission from the Board. He pointed out that any outlay on lime or seeds for the tenants would have been wasted unless they were given professional advice on their use because 'they are completely ignorant of every principle of agriculture.'

I am afraid you will think me imprudent but I can't well avoid it. What I allude to is I have engaged an agriculturalist for the Dungannon Schoolands who has been strongly recommended to me and whom I should have lost had I delayed to secure.

From talking to the tenants I find they are completely ignorant of every principle of agriculture and I don't like that after the Board should have agreed to lend lime and seeds the chief benefit should be lost for want of instruction. I think I shall make him assist in the bogs so that the extra expense will not be more than about £15 a year and as the Board have allowed me to lay out in rows and draining the saving that was made in the purchase of the arrears I think they will not object to continue for the improvement of the estate any income that may arise from that expenditure which in fact costs them nothing and I expect that the benefit which will arise from this source would be sufficient to cover this expense and perhaps help those who will have to build new houses with good windows and give the country a respectable appearance.

'I must trust to you taking a favourable opportunity to lay this before the Board who I hope will not be displeased at my anxiety to put this property on a respectable footing as I don't wish to exceed the profits arising from the labour for the payment of which they will be nothing out of pocket.' 1 August 1832

Letter To Messrs McCausland, Fatherstown, Dublin, Solicitors, in response to their application for a copy of the list of arrears due by tenants on the Dungannon Schoolands estate as returned by Mr Murray.

'... I now send it to you but as the arrangement has now been acting on for some time without any difficulty arising I am rather of opinion that we shall not find any trouble hereafter.'

3 August 1832

Letter To William C Quinn, Esq, Secretary to the National Commissioners of Education, 12 Stephen's Green, Dublin, referring to the satisfactory settlement of a boundary dispute between the Dungannon Schoolands estate and the Manor Annesley estate by Richard Griffith acting as arbitrator. The Ordnance Survey in which Griffith was involved was begun in 1826 as an aid to accurate assessment of county cess. The surveyor employed on the Gosford estate was Alexander Richmond of Poyntzpass. Blacker complains of the failure of the Board of Works to provide bridges over the drainage ditch which cuts off tenants from part of their holdings. He also suggests that the former middleman Murray acquiesced in the flooding of the estate because he 'expected a renewal and wished to keep the property in as backward a state as possible until that could be accomplished.' The delay by the Board of Works was probably more due to the straightened circumstances of the Irish economy than to any other factor. The fears of flooding on the estate were to prove fully justified in the years that followed.

'I have been two days endeavouring to get the disputed mearings settled and I am happy to say I have at last succeeded and the result is that the estate has gained considerably in extent though the land being at present in an unreclaimed state is not now of much value but will in a few years. There are, I think, 30 or 40 acres given up to the School [estate] which are outside the bounds of the old map as well as I can calculate but the possession being generally considered to have been on one side it was not disputed. This boundary has been the source of continual warfare between the tenants of the respective estates and I am very happy to have it accomplished.

Mr Griffith having required some new surveys and measurements and an alteration of the scale so as to be more easily compared with the Ordnance Survey, the surveyor has been a good deal taken off from his work which I shall have to remunerate him for but it has answered a good purpose.

'I am sorry to say that the Board of Works although they promised to have the back drain cleared out, have not taken a single step towards it. I have twice called on their inquirer on the subject who now tells me they did not include it in their estimates and that they will not do it this year nor are they preparing to put the bridge over it which they formerly ordered it to be done. Unless you will assist me by a most decided remonstrance nothing will be taken in hand and the lands will be flooded as formerly. Mr Murray it is thought, expected a renewal and wished to keep the property in as backward a state as possible until that could be accomplished and therefore all this injury has been submitted to but I have no doubt the Board of Works are liable to having action of damages.

'I am told for a great many years subsequent to the back drain being made there never was any land flooded and now it is annually the case. I beg to press this on your attention and also that the season is now coming on when you must ascertain for me precisely whether there will be any alteration in the period of furnishing the accounts. When the Primate is passing through Dublin perhaps there may be a bond[?].

14 August 1832

Letter To Mr C A Griglietti, 5 Dawson Street, Dublin, concerning the payment of an account. The receipt of rents after harvest enabled Blacker to pay outstanding accounts. The bulk of estate revenue was collected between September and January and was payable retrospectively for an entire year instead of the usual two gales in November and May.

'Some days ago I obtained an order from the Provincial Bank of Armagh in payment of your account which has been forwarded to you without your acknowledging the receipt. Yesterday I have received a letter from a Mr Connor claiming £6 14s 5d, the price of a writ said to have been served on the sheriff. I beg to know whether this is by your authority and when the proceedings alluded to were authorised by you...'

3 September 1832

Letter To William C Quinn, Esq, Secretary of National Commissioners of Education, Board of Education Office, Stephen's Green, Dublin, concerning the flooding problem and the lack of a bridge or bridges on the Dungannon Schoolands estate.

'I am glad to hear there is any chance of your getting the Board of Works to listen to reason. I send you the correspondence except the last Letter To and from them which was merely applying to have the back drain cleared, and the bridges made and their reply positively refusing as they had not included it in their estimates. The expense of the drain is estimated at about £30 and one stone bridge at £20 and wooden one at £9. The drain and one bridge is absolutely necessary this season.'

'PS There was two letters of Mr Pain's sent with the above one dated 20 June 1832 and the other 27 June 1832.'

8 September 1832

Letter To W Paton, Manager, Provincial Bank of Ireland, Armagh, concerning the lodgement of £700 to the credit of W C Quinn, Secretary of the National Commissioners of Education for the Dungannon Schoolands estate.

'There has this day been lodged at this office by William Blacker Esq the sum of £700 sterling for the credit of W C Quinn Esq whose drafts to that amount on or after 26th inst you will honour and charge the same to the account of the Provincial Bank of Ireland with this branch...'

19 October 1832

Letter To William C Quinn Esq, Secretary to the National Commissioners of Education, Dublin, concerning the first rent collection made by Blacker on the Dungannon Schoolands estate. It is unlikely that the sum of £700 was the nominal rent since in 1843 the total revenue was £1,400 from arable holdings and £200 from bogs. He refers with pleasure to the fact that the Primate took the trouble of going to see the Schoolands estate and particularly the part where work is going on making drains and roads and he also went through 'some of the clay islands as far as they were accessible'. These clay islands provided the topsoil which was transported to reclaim the bogland. Reference is made to the fishing rights at Washing Bay which were in dispute with Lord O'Neill.

'I do not know the mode prescribed by the Board for making remittances and have taken the liberty to send the annexed letter of credit (38A) to you trusting you would take the trouble to apply it in the proper manner and send me the necessary voucher.

'I received yours of 17th this morning the object of which had occurred to me and Mr Richardson has been applied to. The Primate has been good enough to take the trouble of going to see the Schoolands particularly that part where I am at work in making drains and roads and also went through some of the clay islands as far as they were accessible. I thought he seemed sensible of the necessity of some increased exertions to better the situation of the miserable tenantry in consequence of which I should be very glad if you could consistently with your official duty let me know what annual income was absolutely necessary to enable the Board to meet their engagements, taking in the payment of the instalments to Mr Murray into the calculation in order that I might digest some plan suitable to their finances for the improvement of the property.

'Be kind enough to let me know when the general meeting of the Board is to take place. I expect to make you another remittance but shall not be able to furnish you a regular account as Mr Murray's rental and arrears are disputed in a great number of cases which he will in all probability have to refer to the quarter sessions.

'I have got no answer from Mr Fetherston as the the mode of maintaining the exclusive right to the fishery. When you see him will you mention it and also that he has not sent my power of attorney.'

Endorsed 'J R Jefferyes account c/o Messrs J D La Touche & Co Bankers Dublin.'

19 October 1832

Incomplete Letter To Major Smith, 9 Upper Woburn Place, London. 'I am directed by Lord Gosford to reply to your note of the 8th inst and I beg to say that although there may have been a decree such as you allude [to] his Lordship is led to believe...'

13 November 1832

Letter To William C Quinn Esq, Secretary of the National Commissioners of Education explaining something of the difficulties of attempting improvements on the Dungannon School lands estate. It was extremely difficult to make an illiterate tenantry see reason. Any change was justifiably viewed with suspicion as the majority of proprietors only introduced change for their own benefit. The serving of ejectment notices was little more than a formality as eviction was seldom carried out. Such was the solidarity of the tenantry that unless they agreed with the justice of such proceedings, the vacated holdings would not be re-occupied, leaving management with a reduction in revenue.

Blacker intended straight boundary ditches (mearings) to regularise the divisions he had planned but the surveyor's markings had been obliterated.

'I am favoured with yours of the 27th. I have been waiting in daily expectation of hearing from you, thinking the meeting had taken place. On going to the school lands on Saturday last I was sorry to find that some of the inhabitants of Derry Ollagh (one of the islands in the bog) whose cattle had formerly grazed over the waste bog adjoining had presumed to resist the appropriation of some of the reclaimable part for the purpose of bringing it into cultivation and had filled up the station holes made by the surveyor in marking out the allotment and threatened to shoot anyone that would come there to occupy. Upon examination I selected four of the ring leaders and ordered ejectments to be brought against them. I told them they should be turned out of the estate. There could be nothing more unreasonable than their opposition for they were all individually benefited by the allotment that had been made. Among such an illiterate population unaccustomed to any control and thinking themselves safe in their almost inaccessible situation, something of this kind is not to be wondered at, but I don't much apprehend putting the thing down by decided measures. The land in question was a decided waste in which neither plough or spade had ever entered so that there is no excuse for their conduct but it makes me more anxious to have the Board's approbation of the outline transmitted to you, that by having considerable advantage to hold out I might be able to make reward and punishment combined to effect what is wanted.'

'I should think there would be no great difficulty in getting the Dean Ardagh to take the money now and postpone the last payment but it would be well to ask him if you have the opportunity. I send you a petition I received yesterday from one of Lord Gosford's tenants which will show the Board the spirit of agricultural exertion which is taking place on his Lordship's estate under the operation of the same system which I am recommending for their adoption in the School Lands and which I have found produce the same effect in various other places. ...'

PS. 'I forgot in my statement to take any notice of the bog which I hope I shall, when all is settled, realise near £100 buy.'

29 November 1832

Letters to William C Quinn Esq, Secretary of the National Commissioners of Education thanking the Board for their approval of his recommendations for the Dungannon School Lands estate. He refers to a particular difficulty over payment of tithes. On occasion the School Land tenants had successfully defied previous demands especially for payment of tithes to the established Church of Ireland. Poor communications had not helped as the bogs provided an inaccessible sanctuary. Blacker's improvements were making such evasion impossible as new roads were built and drainage progressed but by including tithes in the new rent valuations it was no longer so obvious to the tenantry that they were contributing to an alien church.

'I have been favoured with statement of the Board's approval of the recommendations in my statement respecting the School Lands and I beg to express by gratification at the confidence they have been pleased to repose in me and to assure them through you that everything in my power shall be done to merit the continuance of it. Things are going on pretty smooth and I hope to carry the new arrangements into execution without any very serious opposition but it is rather a hazardous operation in these times.'

'I have been within these few days applied to by Mr Miller of Moneymore for payment of £11 0s. 5d. due by the Board for tithes of the bogs. I have demurred until I could get the necessary authority from you. He says it will appear in Mr Murray's accounts, as the composition on bog, he says, is always charged against the landlord. I shall be glad to hear from you on the subject at your earliest convenience.'

'It may be right also to mention that he complains the tenants had not paid their own tithes under the composition and threatened to bring the military to distrain. I have written to the tenantry they would incur the displeasure of the Board if they did not pay all legal demands and particularly as they would on coming under the new valuation be exonerated from any demands of the kind in future. I think it might be desirable that you should write me such a letter as I could forward in order to give more weight to my recommendation.'

[December 1832]

Letter To John Cornwall Esq, [Granby Row, Dublin] stressing that nothing less than 6% interest will be acceptable to Col. Munro, his brother Rev Samuel Blacker or himself complaining at the failure to repay Colonel Munro in particular. The loan may have been made on behalf of Sir William [ ] who hopes to 'make so good a match' as to be able to pay off Colonel Munro. The 'convenient match' was a much favoured method of overcoming insolvency.

'I am sorry to have cause to complain of your breach of agreement which has been the cause of very great inconvenience.'

'I beg now to inform you on the part of Colonel Munro, my brother and myself that nothing less than six per cent will be taken from the date of last payment. I am glad to hear Sir William being about to make so good a match which I hope will enable him to pay off Colonel M[unro] who I am pretty confident will not let his money remain at any interest whatever as nothing can compensate to him for such disappointment which if it were not for his friends might have involved him in the most serious consequences.'

27 December 1832

Letter from John Mitchell cashier and rent collector at the Gosford Estate Office, Markethill to Messrs Jacob Wrench & Sons, London placing an order for turnip and clover seed. Mitchell directs that shipment be made c/o Thomas Wann, Northern Bank Belfast, who was a brother of William Wann, Mitchell's assistant at Markethill and Blacker's successor as agent for the Gosford and Dungannon School Land estates. The rise at Belfast as a port in the 1830s may be discerned from the volume of goods which passed through it in preference to Newry.

Mitchell seeks for credit from seed time until harvest. He also uses Rev Gervais as an intermediary.

'I have received your letter of the 23rd inst and observe the contents. Since writing to you formerly I have met with the Rev Mr Gervais who I find is personally acquainted with you Mr Wrench and from what he has stated I feel confident that by leaving the whole thing to yourselves I shall be put on the best footing. I therefore annex the list of what I want shipped on my account by first steamer to Belfast addressed to the care of Mr Thomas Wann Northern Bank Belfast. I beg you may let me know whether the credit I have required is greater than you are in the habit of giving. If you can't accommodate me at that credit at the lowest price charged to other correspondents, the plead to let me know what the extra charge is that I may have the option of availing myself of the reduced price if it should be convenient for me so to do.

'I will depend on getting the seeds of such a quality as will please Mr Gervais who intends to deal largely with me for the supply of his tenantry. Have the value fully named so that if any accidents happen you may have your payment secured without calling on me.'

NB The Malta turnip proves an excellent field turnip and would be glad you could have some grown so as to supply it as cheap as other turnip seed.

Ordered the following seeds:

Best red clover 120 cwt

White globe 3 cwt

Large Aberdeen bullock turnip 3 cwt

Yellow Swedish turnip 2 cwt

Tankard turnip 1 cwt

Green top field turnip 1 cwt

Early stone turnip 1 cwt

Malta turnip 28 1bs.

Letter To Messrs Beck Shearman & Co seedsmen, Strand, London concerning a supply of seeds for Lord Gosford's estate in Co. Cavan.

'I shall not order any clover from you this year but I shall require a considerable quantity of turnip seed partly for this place and partly for Mr J Fyfe Arvagh. I shall therefore thank you to send me by the most expeditious conveyance to Belfast to the c/o Mr Thomas Wann the following quantities viz:

14 stone or 1 cwt 3 quarters O1bs of real Yellow Aberdeen

1 cwt 2 quarters of Yellow Swedish

1 cwt of Red Norfolk

1 cwt of White Globe

And I have directed Mr Fyfe to write to you for what he may require which is to be shipped to c/o Messrs William & Co, Brookes, Sackville Street, Dublin by first conveyance.'

'Send separate accounts of each parcel to me putting your letters under cover to the Earl of Gosford Boodles Club, St James's Street, I beg you will be particular as to the quality for they say here that I have never got the real Yellow Aberdeen yet.'

29 March 1833

Letter To His Grace the Lord Primate detailing the method of fixing rent on bog land under reclamation on the Dungannon School Lands estate. The process of reclamation was normally considered to take 21 years. In its essentials the proposal was an incentive to improve bog as quickly as possible and expressed arithmetically. 21 March 1833

The Irish paper currency had been subject to severe depreciation in the five years after 1815. By 1820 many private banks had failed and until the 1825 Act (5 Geo IV C.T3) confidence was shaken in those that survived. In spite of the introduction of joint stock banking and the abolition of the Irish currency (1826) the money supply remained precarious, subject as it was to inflows and outflows of gold to and from London. Blacker's comprehension of monetary economics was much more preceptive than that of the average agent and probably stemmed from his commercial days in Belfast. His statement (Appendix 6) to the Devon Commission on the recession in 1840-44 anticipated the liquidity trap expounded by Keyres a century later, but his primary concern was the cessation of convertibility of the paper issue and the refusal by the Bank of England to discount private bills of exchange when exchange rates moved beyond the gold points, occasioned by speculation especially in the Hamburg exchange.

'My Lord I have been considering for some time past how to fix a rent upon the reclaimable lands belonging to the Dungannon school in such a way as to encourage the tenant and remunerate the Board and I take the liberty to submit the following outline for your Grace's consideration:

The tenant to pay for the first seven years the rent now laid on being the value of the land in its present unimproved state which will be a mere trifle.'

'The Board to allow me to advance any pecuniary assistance which the funds at present placed at my disposal might enable me to do.'

'The tenant to pay interest on such advances at 5% over and above the rent.'

'At the end of seven years the Board to have the land re-valued at whatever the improvement upon the original acreable value was to charge only one half the advance for seven years more and so on until the land was brought into a proper state of cultivation when the tenant should have it for 21 years in place of seven calculating the rent upon the aforesaid principle.'

'For example if the land is worth originally 2s. 0d. per acre and at the end of 7 years is found to be worth 5s. 0d. per acre, 3s 0d. is the advance and the half of that 1s. 6d. being added to the original rent of 2s. 0d. the rent for the next seven years will be fixed at 3s. 6d. per acre.'

'Again at the end of the next seven years if it is found to be worth 10s. Od. the advance will be 6s. 6d. per acre the half of which say 3s. 3d. being added to the former rent of 3s. 6d. the new rent would be 6s. 9d. per acre and so on keeping in view that wherever the man was fully improved the money advanced (which is always kept as a separate concern) is repaid then [?] the tenant will be entitled to the assurance of having it for 21 years unless his own bad conduct in other respects should bring upon him the displeasure of the Board.'

'Under the above plan it is to be observed the tenant has a strong incitement to use the utmost exertion to improve the land to the utmost within the first seven years because if he does so he will have the rent for the increased term of 21 years upon much cheaper terms than he would supposing him to have taken 14 years to accomplish it. For example supposing that at the end of the second 7 years the land was found to be fully improved and worth 10s. 0d. per acre then the rent for the 21 years succeeding would be 6s. 9d. per acre as stated but if it had been brought to its full value in the first seven years and found at the expiration of that term to have been worth 10s. 0d. in the calculation would have stood thus: present value 10s. 0d. per acre from which deducting original rent of 2s. 0d. per acre the advance is 8s. 0d. half of which 4s. 0d. added to the standing rent of 2s. 0d. makes the rent for 21 years term only 6s. 0d. per acre in place of 6s. 9d. which it would in the other case be.'

'The Board have already left to my discretion the present rent to beg charged upon the reclaimable land but I should not wish to act upon any plan of this kind without particular authority and beg to submit it for your Grace's consideration before forwarding it to be laid before the Board...'

PS. 'I should be inclined to adopt the same principle over the entire estate for where there is the prospect of an advance it is very much to be desired that a settled understanding should exist as to when that advance was to take place. At the expiration of a lease the tenant submits to an advance without grumbling but if he had held the same land as tenant at will for the same period and that the same advance had been demanded or if he had held it twice as long he would consider a rise [?] rent to be taking advantage of his improvements. Now I have no doubt whatever that the estate will be greatly benefitted by the measure now pursuing and the fixing a period of seven years for a revision of the property upon a principle that would protect the tenant from overcharge would be in my mind very desirable for both parties.'

Observation by the Lord Primate on this proposal: 'it appears to me that the plan herein stated may be adopted with advantage in as much as the land which is to be let is now unprofitable and of no value and consequently the Board may gain and cannot lose by the proposed arrangement. I conceive it will be necessary to bind the tenants to some specified rotation of crops to prevent those who do not attend to continue on their farms from injuring those previously to their having them...'

Letter To the Earl of Gosford, London expounding in detail his views on the problems of Irish Currency and banking system with some reference to the Revenue Department of the East India Company.

'I think Ireland has made a bad exchange. I should rather have had Mr Stanley remain. You asked my opinion as to the currency. You have so often heard me harp upon it that I think you ought to know it as well as myself but I send you a few hurried hints which I think are worthy of consideration. I am quite sure you must continue in a bad way as long as small notes are prohibited.'

'I have been reading the East India documents. Will you give my compliments to Lord Grey and tell him if he puts Munro at the head of the Revenue Department that I'll engage there shall be no deficit in the territorial income. He took the management of the Travancore district when it owed I think 3 millions sterling to the Company which he paid off and after paying all expenses of Government left I think near 2 millions in the native treasury. I believe he is now in London and will be with you I dare say for he wants to get leave to purchase an unattached company for his son.

'You will see a curious account of Mr Donnelly from Richy[?] to Ld A[cheson]. I wish you may not have suffered severely already. Let me know what is thought of my banking system. I think myself it is well contrived to afford liberty and control. The check of being obliged to pay 5% Government would be sufficient to ensure prudence at being able to get relief at that rate would promote liberal discount and large joint stock capitally would increase public security.'

'I could give you a plan of taxing property in the funds in a way I think that would not at all cramp buying of selling the absolutely efficient, by charging a percentage on the dividends and deduct it on the bank books on each transfer according to the time each holder had it in possession - they might sell as often as they liked. I don't think there is either law or justice that a man by putting his money into the funds should thereby escape paying his share to the exigiences of the state upon the stability of which his own security depends far more than if it was vested in land. Did you ever get me the information I asked as to corn.'

Banking system

The great objects to be attended to are the following:

First security against failure and loss to the public.

Second to provide a sufficient circulating medium.

Third to provide against an over issue of paper.

Fourth to guard against the exportation of the coin.

Fifth to protect bankers against a run for specie.

The first may be provided for by joint stock companies and limiting their calculation to a sum within their security sufficient to ensure sufficient assets.

The second may be obtained by allowing an issue in small notes payable in specie to a suitable extent beyond their paid up capital.

The third may be secured by checking the issues through the stamp office and confining it to the limit in number two but it does not appear to me that payment in specie in itself affords the necessary check where people of property are concerned which must be the case in joint stock companies.

The fourth may be obtained by charging a suitable percentage on coining bullion which would make it more valuable as coin and therefore if exported it would retain to the kingdom again being more valuable there than anywhere else.

'The fifth might be obtained by having Parliamentary Commissioners empowered to afford relief to bankers in times of alarm by discounting their securities and issuing Exchequer Bills in lieu thereof bearing an interest of 2½ to 3 per cent to an extent proportioned to the amount of their subscription not paid up and by making them a legal tender when offered in payment in said proportion with specie for the same to be paid.'

'The Commissioners might, if thought necessary, be empowered to require a statement of the bank account but I only propose this as preferable to a public exposure of their affairs thinking that if the issue is kept under the solid security there is little occasion for such surveillance.'

'In times of alarm a panic struck creditor would naturally wish in drawing out his deposits to have his money placed elsewhere bearing interest and an Exchequer Bill would effectually answer his purpose.'

'When the securities discounted became payable Commissioners might be authorised to employ the funds thus placed in their hands by buying up their own exchequer bills which would make them always saleable at par in the market and if raised above par to buy into the funds and by discounting at 5% and only paying 3% on the Exchequer Bills issued there would be a fund raised that would pay all the expenses. Thus if the bankers were so imprudent in their issues that they would have to apply to the Commissioners the profits on their trade would be transfered to the Commissioners and would lose the object they had been aiming at.'

31 March 1833

Letter To William C Quinn Esq, Secretary of the National Commissioners of Education, 12 Stephen's Green Dublin concerning the improvement of the houses of the tenantry on the Dungannon Schoolands estate. When Blacker began his improvements he retained the best existing houses which fell inside the new mearings but insisted on the demolition of the tumbled down cabins belonging to both small holders and cottars. The advantages of new houses must have been apparent to the tenantry for, as Blacker pointed out, he had to serve only one ejectment order on a recalcitrant small holder.

'I mean to try and get as far as the School Lands tomorrow to arrange if I can about the encouragement to build which your last has afforded me the means. You will not think my application was very extravagant when I tell you the new houses necessary for tenants obliged to remove from their old residences amount to 120 and of cottars removed to reclaimable lots 32 being in all 152 and there will be some more new lots yet according as the drains begin to operate more effectually. These new lots are generally about 6 acres each and besides these which are given to new tenants there is a great deal given in to enlarge the existing farms of the old tenants.'

'It must be evident that the late grant, liberal as it is, would not meet such a demand but the former liberality of the Board placed a considerable sum at my disposal for the improvement of the property and part of this I mean to make available for the assistance of the original tenants whose houses, being pulled down to comply with the new allotments, have an extra claim upon the Board beyond cottars who are removed from houses not their own.'

'To the former I have promised to give such help as I may find them to require as far as my means go but if obliged to encroach on the last grant for them it shall be upon the terms fixed by the Board.'

'It is Mr Murray who keeps me back from giving you an exact detail of all my proceedings from the commencement. He is fighting with a considerable number of the tenants to establish demands against them at the Sessions which I really think are excessive and which are included in the rental and arrears furnished by him. I hope this last Sessions may have settled the points in dispute. Until this is done I can't tell the exact rental to charge myself with.'

'Notwithstanding the loss of houses which is certainly upon rather an alarming scale, all is at present in a satisfactory state and the new houses will be of a much more comfortable description. There are already some of a very creditable appearance began. I have only been obliged to go in with one ejectment and if I can get the matter settled tomorrow I shall have to put the decree into immediate execution. ...'

24 April 1833

Letter To William C Quinn Esq, Secretary of the National Commissioners of Education, 12 Stephen's Green Dublin concerning assistance to tenants in building new houses on the Dungannon Schoolands estate. Tenants were offered bricks for chimneys, timber for roofing and window frames to facilitate ventilation. Blacker's proposal to grant 21 year leases was never implemented and the tenants in fact became tenants-at-will. The school about which Blacker enquired was not in fact built on the estate until the mid 1860s.

'I went to the School Lands yesterday and mentioned the contents of your letter in a way which I fear would rather create disappointment if the assistance should be eventually refused by the Board - still however in a way that may be recalled if they should so order it which however I hope is not to be apprehended.'

'The houses at present are at most universally of a description not to be parallel perhaps in Munster, all clustered together and surrounded with manure heaps and pits filled with every kind of filth so that it is my astonishment that they (the inhabitants) are not carried off by some pestilential disease.

The people seem disposed, I think, to build new houses of a more comfortable description with the assistance I have held out and if it is not withdrawn the face of the country in another year will be totally changed. Indeed I may say that if the Primate comes down to see what has been doing he will find a surprising change even in August next.'

'The proposal as to the rent I modified in a way to be more simple and intelligible to the tenants and leaving it more discretionary with the Board viz. that if the Commissioners were satisfied with the tenant's conduct in all respects it was their intention to let them have a tenure of 21 years if they had their lots brought completely into cultivation and if only partially improved they would only get seven years in place of the 21 upon the calculation mentioned but that the Board made no promise nor declared themselves in any way from turning the tenant off the lands if they were dissatisfied with his conduct.'

'£100 would probably be wanted in May £100 August and the remainder at November or perhaps October but for any direction from the above to meet the arrangements of the Board I could easily arrange.'

'Mr Murray's demands against the tenants are not claims in addition to the rent and arrears returned in the rental but several have disputed the returns he made against them and to establish the correctness of his return he has summoned them to the last two quarter sessions. When they disputed the charge made against them I threw it upon Mr Murray to prove his demand. In some cases he has succeeded and in others been defeated but I think all the cases are now disposed off and I have my principal clerk (who is at present staying at the School Lands) with him this day to try and make a final settlement of the matter. Of course a proportional abatement will be made in the sum to be paid him corresponding with any reduction from his return of what is due by the tenantry. I don't think therefore that the Board can with property [?] interfere as it is quite a matter of private account between Mr Murray and his tenant with which the Commissioners I think should not meddle.'

'You have never returned in any answer as to the mode of protecting the right to the fishery and there is also the question as to the school, when you get a Board...'

26 April 1833

Letter To Mrs Whiteside No. 3 Fitzwilliam Square South, Dublin, making enquiry about brothers named Robinson named in certain leases for lives on Lord Gosford's estate. A common difficulty with three live leases was the nomination of lives who on marriage left the district or country, especially females who acquired new surnames. A tenant in possession of such a lease could sell his holding to an incoming tenant who lacked acquaintance with those named on the lease, leaving both the agent himself in a quandary upon expiry.

'The reason why I am obliged to trouble you on the present occasion is that I see in some of Lord Gosford's leases the names of Andrew Robinson and Arthur Robinson brother, sons of James Robinson then of Markethill, these leases granted in the year 1760 and it appears the one was 7 years old at the time and the other 5 years old. On enquiry I find that Mrs McCreery of Markethill is the only person [who] could tell anything whatever about them. She says they both left this country for America about 35 years ago and that she never heard of them since but referred me to you for further information.'

'I will feel obliged as soon as convenient that you will have the goodness to acquaint me when you last heard from them and whether they are dead or livinig. If alive as I should suppose they are not, they would be near about 80 years of age. Your attention to this will oblige...'

1 May 1833

Copy letter from John Whiteside, 3 Fitzwilliam Square South, Dublin to John Mitchell [Gosford Estate Office, Markethill, Co. Armagh] pointing out the existence of a life in the lease for lives enquired of [49]. This is probably a matter of regret to both agent and landlord as the rent fixed in the lease of 1760 would have borne little relation to current values in 1833. The average duration of a 3 life lease was 60 years.

'My mother has handed me your letter and after every enquiry she directs me to mention that her uncle Andrew she belives to be dead. Her uncle Arthur settled many years ago in London and attained some eminence as a medical man. A few years ago she heard he was alive and well. His address my mother cannot give but I apprehend enquiries might easily be made in London. He had retired from practice and was living in a genteel quarter of London with a son and two daughters.

The Robinsons were all long livers. The Rev John Robinson of Dublin who was much older than either of the brothers you mention only died here about one year since. My mother is in excellent health and begs to [be] remembered to you and her old friends in Markethill. She has 10 grandchildren and yet seems to be growing young. If you chance to be in Armagh at next assizes you may see me there as I mean henceforward to go that circuit. I like the north. I have great rea+on to be satisfied with my professional success for so far. Will you remember us to Mr Browne and his family...'

7 May 1833

Letter To W C Quinn Esq, Secretary to the National Commissioners of Education, Dublin. 20 May 1833 Letter detailing arrangements to help tenants displaced upon the reclaimable lots on the Dungannon school lands estate. Certain obligations were imposed on the tenants for example it was absolutely forbidden to have two grain crops in succession from the same ground. Defiance of this rule involved loss of tenant right. It should be pointed out that tenant right was something to which the tenantry had not been entitled under the middle man Murray but once his claims had been met Blacker permitted tenant right. Tenant right depended ultimately on the landlord's approbation but was seldom denied if the incoming tenant was deemed 'respectable and improving'.

'In conversing with my brother on the subject of the School Lands, he seemed to think that there was a danger in entering into the arrangements with the tenants upon the reclaimable lots unless it was reduced to writing and properly considered. I therefore think it better to send to you a copy of what was read out to the people but I gave no duplicate of it to anyone and I can easily have any alteration made, should any be thought desirable. The present plan is less complicated than what I at first suggested and seemed to give the people great satisfaction. You will be so good to let me know as soon as convenient whether anything further is necessary in regard to it...'

Plan of assisting those who have houses to build

'Tenants who have had to change their residence will be entitled to windows, 100 of brick for each chimney and 10½(?) for each bay, with liberty to get what timber is necessary for the roof out of the bogs to be laid off for them by Mr Perie{John Perie the new agriculturist was a dour unbending Scot, who unlike John Fyffe in the Gosford estate in Co. Cavan was not popular with the tenants, though most acknowledged his fairness and honesty.} to be given to those first who have their houses ready first. The contribution from the tenants who have not to remove will I expect be paid in time to enable them to get thatch and other necessaries. Those who leave their houses to the last will run the chance of not being able to find timber and will suffer for their own negligence. For further particulars see observations at the foot of the Cottar regulations.

Plan of assisting Cottars settling unreclaimable lots

'Cottars who have not the means of building such houses as the Board require will be assisted with what materials may be necessary which shall be provided as cheap as possible, the cost of which the Board will allow to be repaid by instalments in 10 years if not sooner practicable for which advance no interest will be charged.

'Unless there is timber left in the bogs after the roofing of the tenant's houses the Board will have to get larch poles which they are promised in the month of October. In the meantime the walls should be built in order to become dry that the house may be habitable as soon as roofed. The timber will be ready most likely as soon as straw can be obtained but if it can be got in the bog it will be so much better and cheaper. The annual instalment will be added to the rent until all is paid when the amount will be deducted. No assistance will be given except for such houses as are built of a size equal to the drawing with Mr Perie and the full height in the wall by which means a half storey may be made inside at any time at a trifling expense.

'The houses must be built the breadth of a garden from the road so that no nuisance may exist and it is recommended that the gable should be turned towards the road and the floor of the house must be at least 8ins. higher than the ground outside. Nothing will be advanced by the Board except for such objects as the labour and exertion of the cottar are evidently unable to attain.

Plan of adjusting the rent so as to give the tenant an ample remuneration for his industry and at the same time give a fair return to the Board.

'The tenant to be charged for the first 7 years the value of the land as it at present stands at the end of which time a new valuation to be made when it will be expected that the whole will be reclaimed and shall be found under a regular rotation of crops in which case it is the Board's intention to let the tenant continue to hold his allotment for 21 years more charging an advanced rent of only one half the improvement made in the value by the tenant's cultivation viz. supposing the allotment now worth 5s. an acre and it shall be found at that time to be made worth 10s. per acre the new rent will be 7s. 6d. for the term of 21 years or if it is now worth 10s. and shall then be worth 20s. the new rent will be 15s. per acre for 21 years but if the whole allotment capable of cultivation shall not have been reclaimed at the end of the 7 years then the tenant shall only be entitled to an additional term of 7 years more in place of 21 years as at first stated but shall have the benefit of the same calculation of the rent. This arrangement however to depend entirely upon the pleasure of the Board and is not to prevent their turning out any tenant at any time who may incur their displeasure and it is particularly to be understood that anyone taking two grain of crops in succession or doing anything impoverish the land shall thereby forfeit all claim to the favourable consideration of the Board and will loose his tenant right and all loans and advances must be repaid before the abatement thus held out can be claimed and everyone is expected immediately to exert themselves to the utmost in the improvement of their allotment in failure of which it will be taken from them and given to someone else. The new allotments not be valued until the timber is raised so that it may be proportioned to its existing state'.

25th April 1833.

Letter To Rev Dr Buck, Clonoe, Stewartstown [19 October 1833] concerning composition for tithes paid to the church of Ireland on the Dungannon School Lands estate. 15 per cent commission was paid to tithes proctors and as Blacker the tithes along with the rents he was entitled to this commission.

'I am able to attend to business again though not able to visit your neighbourhood yet. By your return to Mr Wann the amount of the composition for tithe chargeable to the School Lands amounts to £100.7s.5½d. from which deducting the 15 per cent the nett sum payable will be £85.6s.2½d. This sum I mention to you I would recommend to the Board to pay you for the year 1833 which I shall be prepared to do as soon as I receive the rents which I have fixed to do the 25 November which I hope will be satisfactory to you'.

Aughamullan Devlin £15. 4s. 8d.

Aughamullan Espy £12. 3s. 9d.

Mousetown(?) £ 7. 9s. 4d.

Turnthir(?) £ 6.18s.11d.

Lisnastrane £10. 1s. 1d.

Derrylaghan £15. 9s. 4d.

Derrylaghan Bog £ 5. 5s. 0d. £20.14s. 4d.

Derrytresk £23. 5s. 8½d.

Derrytresk Bog £ 4. 9s. 8d. £27.15s. 4½d.

[Total] £100. 7s. 5½d.

Off 15% £15. 1s. 3d.

Nett amount [Total] £ 85. 6s. 2½d.

Letter from William Wann, agent at Markethill to Francis Burke [57 Abbey Street, Dublin], ordering glass for the windows on the new houses on the Dungannon Schoolands estate. 'Mr William Blacker has commissioned me to order from you 1,000 panes of glass 5½" by 7½" and 600 panes 7" by 11 1/8" which he wishes you to prepare immediately as there will be two carriers call on you in the course of the week (Patrick Trodden and Terence Devlin). Either of them will carry them safe and Mr Blacker requests you will have them weighed and a certificate sent alongst with the glass. He wishes you to mention to the carrier that draws it that he will not be paid more than 2s. 6d. per cent and he must deliver it about quarter of a mile beyond Coalisland at Mr Hazleton's "Tumphor". If you cannot agree with either of them at this price a car man will be sent from this. If you have occasion to write direct under cover to Ern Gosford, Markethill. I expect after some time there will be another order for a similar quantity...'

21 October 1833

Letters exchanged with an incoming tenant John Fisher who wished to have a holding at the old rent after the lease had expired. Timber was an asset on the holding and this timber had been registered in the name of the previous owner, a necessary requirement when a leaseholder planted his own trees because all unregistered timber automatically belonged to the proprietor. Any such trees on a holding raised the value of the tenant right considerably and Fisher wished to be reassured of his claim to them. Blacker's answer underlines the fact that no landlord would miss the opportunity to raise rents when holdings returned to his possession.

25 Oct. 1833 Letter from John Fisher, Markethill to Lord Gosford, Gosford Castle.

'According to your Lordship's suggestion I beg to submit the following questions for mutual (?) satisfaction:

1. Am I to understand that I would be received as a tenant at the rent of the original lease during the life of John Black?

2. May I expect that your Lordship will continue me as a tenant on land after the expiration of the present lease without taking any advantage of the improvements?

3. As I am to give a very considerable sum for the timber and other improvements am I to expect that I shall have and enjoy the advantages arising from these improvements the same as if I had registered them myself?

4. Should it meet your Lordship's approbation I would have no objection to give up the old lease if I could come on terms for a new one. Your Lordship's early consideration of this matter will greatly oblige ...'

25 October 1833

Reply to the proposal of John Fisher 'Lord Gosford has no objection to Mr Black selling his holding to Mr Fisher for the life in his lease but it is not his Lordship's habit to enter into any stipulations with his tenants upon other subjects. Mr Fisher's continuance on his estate as a tenant will entirely depend on the propriety of his own conduct. No tenant is ever turned out except for some fault of his own'.

1 November 1833

Letter from William Wann, agent, Markethill to Francis Burke, 57 Abbey Street, Dublin querying the prices quoted for the supply of glass for the windows on the new houses for tenants on the Dungannon Schoolands estate.

'I have been absent for sometime and on my return today Mr Blacker has handed me the invoice of the glass sent by P. Trodden and on comparing the price with your former quotations I observed a material difference:

5½" by 7½" 7d. per foot as per your letter September last per invoice 8d.

11 1/8" by 9½" 9½d. per foot as per your letter September last per invoice 10d.

You must have erred in making out your invoice as it is according to your former letter Mr Blacker intends paying you'.

9 November 1833

Letter To J McAnulty, Brankle near Arvagh, Co. Cavan, drawing a distinction between the payments for goodwill and improvements which together made up tenant right. By 1833 tenant right had become synonymous with 'goodwill' (peaceable possession) and improvements were valued separately. Since tenant right had no legal standing a proprietor could prevent an outgoing tenant from claiming this right but in practice this never occurred under Blacker's management. If the tenant McAnulty had been denied he would have lost his original payment, a precedent that his neighbours would have deplored. It was this solidarity among the tenantry that forced an incoming tenant to pay for 'goodwill' or exist in a constant state of physical danger.

'I am told by Mr Mitchell [agent at Markethill] that he suspects there is an intention to delay giving up possession of the place required from you by his Lordship in the expectation that time for taking proceedings to enforce the possession will be allowed to pass over. Although you have behaved exceedingly ill to his Lordship and have put him by your misconduct to considerable expenses and inconvenience, he nevertheless desired me to let you have an allowance for any permanent or fixed improvements you might have made in the house built as the bailiff's residence, provided you give it up without trouble and this it is my wish to do, but I caution you on the part of his Lordship that he will not consider you entitled to anything nor to any tenant right in the place you have purchased on his estate if Mr Mitchell is obliged to take proceedings in consequence of the possession not being given previous to the time for taking them, of all which you will take notice...'

23 November 1833

Letter To Hugh Mitchell Esq, Edinburgh, settling an account and apologising for delay.

'I now send you a remittance for that part of Dickson and Co's account which you say comes under your collection. This has lain over very long but it has been owing to the confusion attending the change of gardeners which prevented me knowing how matters stood...'

PS 'Direct under cover to Viscount Acheson, M.P., Markethill.

3 December 1833

Letter To Henry Cummins, 1 Leinster Street, Dublin, concerning an unsettled account.

'I am directed by the Earl of Gosford to inform you that some charges of Mr Donelly's have appeared so extraordinary as to require examination and when Mr Donelly gaves that explanation to Mr Farrell who has been appointed by his Lordship to examine the work whatever shall appear due to Mr Donelly is ready for him'. 27 December 1833

William Blacker, Armagh, to the Right Honourable Lord Bangor. Letter discussing arrangements for undertaking the agency on Lord Bangor's Castleward estate in Co. Down. Blacker only held this agency for a few years until the division of the estate after the death of Lord Bangor. Many of the letters concerning the Castleward estate are in a separate copy out-letter book [D1606]

'I have received your kind letter this morning for which I had been in some measure prepared by a previous communication from my brother Maxwell.

'The time your Lordship mentions for receiving will not be inconvenient for me and I should wish the tenants to be warned for the last Wednesday in February which I believe will be the 26th. This will enable me to travel on Monday and have a day to spare to arrange matters. I have written to Mr. Franks for the last rental and list of arrears furnished so that I may prepare books for keeping the accounts and have receipts printed. In entering upon the duties of your Lordship's agency I should wish to explain that I entirely disapprove of the practice of agents taking lease money from the tenants. My wish would be that the whole business of filling up leases should be done by the law agents but as this would be in general attended with inconvenience I merely charge 10s. 6d. for clerk's wages in filling, to which will be added the cost of the maps and the actual cost of the stamps but I decline anything as a personal fee in that or anything else that may come through my department.

'I should be glad your Lordship would let me know whether you have any regular rent office at Castleward, Strangford or elsewhere for the receipt of your rents and the safe custody of leases and other important papers relating to the estate. Wherever I have acted it has been my first object to impress upon the landlord the necessity of attending to this point. It is not unusual for agents to take papers of consequence to their private offices or places of abode and when any change of agents takes place the landlord has to look for his papers as he best can and great inconvenience is thereby often incurred. My practice is to consider the agent's books as the property of the landlord. I charge to him the few shillings which they cost and they are his to all intents and purposes when he calls for them and all petitions, promises and engagements being all kept in the rent office, they all remain for the information of the successor when the agent is changed: the comfort and advantage of which to the landlord and the independence it gives to him must be at once apparent to your Lordship.

'When I hear from your Lordship as to the usual places of receiving the rents both of the Castleward estate and the other you mention near Belfast I shall have short notices printed fixing the days I shall be at each place and acquainting the tenantry with my mode of doing business which I shall send down from Newry to Downpatrick and shall take the liberty of addressing them to your Lordship in hopes you will have the goodness to desire the bailiff to circulate them.

'I have to apologise for troubling your Lordship with so long a letter which however I think will not be uninteresting in the commencement of a connection of this kind. With best compliments to Lady Bangor who I recollect to have upon one occasion had the pleasure of meeting at my brother's ...'

P.S. 'Until the meeting of parliament your Lordship may direct to me under cover to Viscount Acheson M.P., Markethill.

15 January 1834

John Mitchell [Estate Office], Markethill, to Messrs. Jacob Wrench & Sons, London. Letter enclosing an order for garden seeds, with references to William Blacker's pamphlets on 'green crop' farming. This theory was set out briefly in his "prize essay addressed to the Agricultural Committees of the Royal Dublin Society on the management of landed property in Ireland" (Dublin 1834) and more explicitly in his "essay on the Improvements to be made in the cultivation of Small Farms" (Curry and Co., Dublin) more commonly known as the essay on green crops which Blacker hoped would be available for sale throughout Great Britain. Mitchell thinks that the latter pamphlet would have particular relevance for the estates of the London Companies in Co. Londonderry.

'I enclose an order for some garden seeds for some of my customers, which I beg you may send me by first steamer to Belfast, letting me have a line by the vessel that I may know by its receipt of her arrival. Along with them I shall thank you to forward one stone of turnip, cabbage seed and one stone of annual clover. You will be so good to let me know what you expect will be the price. You can supply me with about the same quantity of turnip and clover seed as I had last year from you.

'I was in hopes I should have been able to send you one of Mr Blacker's pamphlets for if they were circulated by the London Societies in their Derry estates you would have a demand for clover and turnip seed that would surprise you.

'The public interest has been so excited by the effect his system has had here that all the copies of the late edition were engaged before they came from the press. I have not been able to get one but I hear there will be a fourth edition published in a few weeks when I shall send you one as you seemed to take an interest in the account of the last agricultural meeting I forwarded...'

7 January 1834

Letter To the Directors of the Northern Bank, Belfast concerning Lord Bangor's finances, Blacker warned that he might require an overdraft during the summer as rents are now generally paid only once a year in November. Blacker insisted on prompt payment of interest on mortgages.

'Being lately appointed agent to Lord Bangor and finding that his Lordship keeps his accounts with you, I am anxious to know whether it would be conformable to your mode of doing business [ ] to the trouble of paying the several persons to whom he is indebted the interest due them as it becomes payable or may be demanded on condition of my remitting the rents as received to your establishment and allowing you 5 per cent interest for any occasional advance that arrangement might lay you under. I mention this without being at all aware that any advance whatever may be necessary but as rents are generally now payable not more than once a year I think it likely that some advance in the summer months may be necessary as I wish to preserve the strictest punctuality in the payments of all demands against his Lordship - of course a certain limit to said advance ought to be specified which should not be exceeded.

'As I shall shortly have an opportunity of seeing Lord Bangor I should wish to be as soon as convenient made acquainted with your determination upon the foregoing proposition. Direct your reply under cover to Viscount Acheson M.P. Markethill.'

24 January 1834

Letter To Rev. Dean Carter, Tandragee concerning payment of tithes due by tenants on the Close estate, Poyntzpass. This dispute became quite acrimonious, as was often the case on Irish estates at that time. In 1830-31 the tithe problem in Ireland was reported on by Select Committees of both Houses. These reports led to the Tithe Composition Act which abolished tithes on agricultural produce such as grain and flax but did not entirely remove the grievances of Dissenters and Roman Catholics. Lord Gosford's son fought the 1835 election in Co. Armagh on the issue of abolition of tithes.

'My dear Sir, I understand that an arrangement was made by which Mr. Close was to become responsible for the payment of your tithe in future at a certain reduction as far as his own estate was concerned. When he some time ago mentioned the subject to me, I was impressed with [the] idea that commissioners had been appointed under the late act for the regulation of your parish, but I have happened since to learn by accident that this has not been the case and that Mr. Mitchell had received from you a statement of what you considered Mr. Close to be liable for. On examining this I find that it is manifestly incorrect - Mrs. Kelly's property being included in it and many tenant's names included in it who have not been on the estate for years; also that numbers of undertenants are in the list I know nothing of whatever.

'I therefore lose no time in acquainting you with the matter that the thing may be arranged in a businesslike way. I am going abroad for a fortnight, but after the assizes if you will have a correct list made out of the tithe payable by each head tenant I shall endeavour to put the collection upon a proper footing. I think your tithe agent had better come over with it and he shall receive any assistance from Mr. Mitchell in his power to give ...'

22 February 1834

Letter To Messrs. Dickson and Turnbull, Seedsmen, Perth placing an order for turnip seed, showing the increased demand for house feeding of cattle.

'It is now come to the time of preparing for the supply of my customers in turnip seed, and agreeable to our correspondence some time ago I now request you to send me immediately the following quantities and as I supply different estates I shall thank you to make a separate invoice of each particular mark.'

'I observe the reduction which you make in yours of the 20th December last but hope you may be able perhaps to make me some little further abatement when you see the quantity contained in the following orders. I require a large quantity every year:

(Yellow Aberdeen 6 bushels), (Yellow Aberdeen 2 bushels), (Yellow Bullock 6 bushels), (Yellow Bullock 2 bushels), (Red Norfolk 2 bushels), (Red Norfolk 2 bushels), (White Globe 2 bushels), (White Globe 2 bushels), (Purple topped Swedish 1 bushel), (Purple topped Swedish 3 bushels)

Above to be forwarded to Belfast and addressed to c/o Mr T Wann [ ] Bank.

1 peck of Yellow Aberdeen

1 peck of Yellow Bullock

1 peck of Purple Topped Swedish

1 peck of Red Norfolk

1 peck of White Globe

To be forwarded to Dublin c/o Messrs Williams & Co Sackville Street.

'I beg you may write me on receipt of this under cover to Earl of Gosford, how soon I may expect the arrival of these articles. I distinguish the Yellow Bullock as I am told it is of a different description from the Yellow Aberdeen though I believe they are sometimes supposed to be the same. The Yellow Bullock appears to me to be a larger turnip but not so good keeping and answers but for the beginning of the season and is a richer turnip than the White Globe. I should like you would give me any information you may be possessed of on this subject as the difference is not well understood here ...'

PS 'You must give a guarantee of the genuine of each article W.B.'

17 March 1834

Letter To Mr Wolstenholme, a middleman on Lord Bangor's estate at Castleward who was apparently rack renting his sub-tenants. The middleman's profit was a clear surplus which any proprietor in financial difficulty would wish to acquire for himself.

'Mr Blacker presents his compliments to Mr Wolstenholme [and] begs to mention that from the urgent demands of Lord Bangor for money he is obliged to call on Mr W[olstenholme] for the amount of the half year's rent due to L[ord] B[angor] at November last which he requests Mr W[olstenholme] will send him a cheque on his bankers for under cover to the Earl of Gosford Markethill.'

'Mr B[lacker] begs further to mention that he apprehends there is some mistake in the rental of November 1831 in Mr W[olstenholme's] holdings particularly as regards Killough, Strand and the lease lately sold (he believes to a Mr Fitzsimons) lying near Castleward. Mr B[lacker] is authorised to say that L[ord] Bangor would be anxious to take all Mr W[olstenholme]'s holdings at will into his own hands forthwith and Mr B[lacker] is therefore anxious to know how far Mr W[olstenholme] is inclined to comply with his Lordship's wish in that respect and will be much obliged by an early reply.' 20 March 1834

Letter To Messrs Curry & Co, Booksellers, Dublin discussing terms for the sale of two of Blacker's pamphlets (1) his Prize Essay (gold medal of the Royal Society) on the management of landed property which was directed at proprietors and might sell best in London and (2) his very successful essay on the reform of Irish agriculture through introduction of a green crop system. This essay sold widely in Ireland and quickly ran to four editions. Blacker was less interested in the sale of his Prize Essay than on circulating his new proposals for Irish agriculture reform. The Great Famine in Ireland and Blacker's death in 1850 probably prevented the spread of a system which would have ameliorated the condition of the small holder and cottar in Ireland.

'Gentlemen, I am informed by Mr Murphy of North Frederick Street [Dublin] that you are disposed to undertake the management of the sale of two small pamphlets of mine at the rate of 10 per cent commission which I am satisfied to allow you upon that which has gained the gold medal of the Royal Society and the same also upon such part of the Farming Address as you may dispose of by retail but I hope you will be satisfied with 5 per cent on the wholesale dealings in the latter which being intended for general distribution are ordered in parcels of from 50 to 1,000. If I added to the price it would destroy the circulation and prevent the good effects I am anxious to produce and as I want to keep something for charitable purposes here you must not be angry at my making a hard bargain with you. I beg you may let me know whether this will be agreeable to you, directing under cover to the Earl of Gosford, Markethill ...'

PS 'I am quite aware that the foregoing would not allow you the means of employing others to assist in the sale but if the plan is approved and people find their advantage in it, they will take the trouble of applying to you direct. I have some time since promised copies, as many as might seem likely to meet the demand of Mr Archer of Belfast and Mr McLary [?] of London. I look to the demand in London to take off the most of the Prize Essay but the Farming Address will naturally be confined to this country.'

20 March 1834

Letter To Mr Herd c/o Calvert Stronge Esq, Dungannon offering him a post as managing the Gosford demesne.

'Mr Herd you may consider yourself hired with Lord Gosford at agriculturist's wages from May next and if you can show any reduction in the expenses of the place His Lordship allows me to give you a Christmas box according to the satisfaction you may give me. I hope you will do credit to my recommendation ...'

PS 'Write in reply and keep this letter.'

9 April 1834

Letter from William Wann to Mr T Burke, 57 Abbey Street, Dublin, arranging for the purpose of glass ware and delivery by cart from Dublin to Gosford Castle. Until the development of Belfast in the 1830s, a considerable quantity of goods were carted from Dublin to Gosford.

'I have left the boxes belonging to you in Armagh to be carried by P. Trodden the first time he is going to town. I am directed by Mr Blacker to order a further supply of glass, one box of the larger size glass and two boxes of the smaller size. The dimensions you are aware of. He desires me to mention that he observed an advertisement lately which mentioned a reduction on glass and he hopes you will give him some abatement. You can send it down by Trodden agreeing with him for carriage as heretofore.'

April 1834

Letter from John Mitchell, Markethill, to Mrs Whiteside, No. 3 Fitzwilliam Square South, Dublin, making enquiry about one John Scott, the last surviving life named in her lease of Drumlack [see Nos.49 and 50] upon the death of any person named in a lease for lives, a fine had to be paid for renewal of the lease.

'Dear Madam, it is reported here that John Scott the last life of your lease in Drumlack is dead. I will feel obliged by your letting me know as soon as convenient how far the report is true and if Mr Scott be still alive will you have the goodness to say when you last heard from him and if still in London what street does he live in and his occupation, and any information you can respecting him ...'

15 April 1834

Letter To Messrs J Curry Junior & Co, Sackville Street, Dublin discussing terms for the sale of Blacker's two pamphlets [see No.66].

'Gentlemen, I am favoured with yours of the 14th and must leave it to yourselves to charge me any extra commission you may think right for distributing through the trade and ensuring the debts leaving the booksellers you send to the 10 per cent same as what you retail or dispose of yourselves, this extra allowance to be confined to the Prize Essay and the landlord's edition which I think it may be useful to force out in order to make the other more known.'

'If you could get the newspapers to insert some extracts from the Prize Essay I think it might be of use. It is a great loss that it was not brought out a few days sooner but tried to get this done before the agricultural meeting disperses.'

"I have already ordered 100 copies to Archer Belfast and 100 to Mr Waters Armagh. I suppose 1,000 copies will be as many as you can calculate with a prospect of sale and you may get that many as you require then from Mr Gill. I have sent a few over to London.'

16 April 1834

Letter from John Mitchell, Markethill to John Cornwall Esq [Gramby Row, Dublin]. Letter detailing small debts due to Blacker by various tenants on the Somerville estate probably fees for drawing up leases, renewal or septennial fines.

'Account of sums due William Blacker Esq by Somerville Tenants

No. 157 Edward Collins £4 10s 0d

No. 185 Patrick Gray £2 0s 0d

No. 212 Thomas Clark £2 6s 0d

No. 216 James Connolly £3 10s 0d

No. 218 James McBride £3 10s 0d

Total £15 16s 0d

Above are the names of a few of the Somerville tenants who are due Mr Blacker the sums annexed to their names for leases and Patt Russell of the Black Lion paid on account of one £2 15s. 8d. Irish which is British £2 11s. 4d.

Patt Duff of Arcath paid for a similar purpose £3 0s. 0d. Total £5 11s. 4d.'

'Mr Blacker will feel obliged by your having the above sums collected for him and have Russell and Duff repaid. The balance £10 14s. 8d. you can lodge with Messrs Ball & Co to Mr Blacker's credit ...'

30 June 1834

Letter from John Mitchell, Markethill to Rev Dean Carter near Tandragee asking for a return of tithes due by each tenant on Col Close's estate to enable him to collect the tithes along with rents. He points out that the rector's agent Hardy is demanding tithes at a rate ¼ higher than that revealed in past receipts.

'I am really at a loss to understand the tithe return Mr Hardy your agent sent me sometime ago. On looking at some of Colonel Close's tenants' tithe receipts and comparing them with your return it appears to me your return sent to me is ¼ or 25 per cent more than your receipts show. At the time you and Mr Hardy was at my office I then stated what I wanted done which was to furnish me with the names of the tenants and townlands, with the sum opposite each tenant's name and the exact sum each was to pay. This latter part has not been done which makes your return of no use to me whatever. I beg you will cause without delay a proper return to be sent me of the actual sum each tenant has to pay agreeable to your last receipt which is the only one I can follow in any case if I am to collect the tithe. If I do not get it with the rents I will have ten times the trouble.'

'I beg to hear from you as to this as soon as possible ...'

30 September 1834

Reply from Rev. Thomas Carter, Tandragee, to John Mitchell, Markethill, concerning collection of tithes on Colonel Close's estate.

'In answer to your letter Mr Hardy assigns the proper reason. I made the allowance of 25 per cent to those who paid 1832 on a time fixed. That allowance nor any other will not in future take place.'

'The sums Mr Hardy returned are what must be received. Fifteen per cent on the gross amount to be deducted as agent's fees according to the act of 2 & 3 William 4th Chap. 119 and of William 4th, 3 & 4 Chap. 100.'

'Lord Mandeville's agent found no difficulty in a similar return given to you and has already paid to me the tithe for 1833 deducting the 15 per cent ...'

[early October 1834].

Letter from William Blacker, Markethill to Dean Carter, Tandragee, concerning payment of tithe by tenants on Colonel Close's estate.

'My dear sir, Mr Mitchell informed me on my return here that the tenants of Mr Close are not satisfied with the demand you have authorised to be made against them for tithe and has stated to me that he had understood from them that Commissioners had been appointed to investigate the value of the composition in consequence of some misunderstanding between you and the parishioners and that the return of what they were liable to ought to be made by the said Commissioners. I therefore applied in this difficulty to Mr Close whose reply I annex you and as the matter is really very pressing in order to show my anxiety upon the subject I propose calling upon you on Wednesday next between 3 and 4 o'clock in hopes that some satisfactory conclusion may be arrived at ...'

PS [Note: see Mr Close's letter on the subject dated 6 Oct. 34 in letter press].

6 October 1834

Further Letter To Dean Carter, Tandragee, concerning the question of tithes on the Close estate. The issue in dispute was whether the 25 per cent abatement in tithes allowed by the rector in 1832 for prompt payment should be continued. Abatements of this sort were a common procedure during a trade recession or when agricultural prices were depressed.'

'You have copy of the answer from Mr Hall to Bennett by which you said the 25 per cent was to continue whilst the price of grain was at the depressed rate which seems likely to be of long continuance and it need not I think be any great bar to permanent agreement. I should like to have the particulars of the tithe since 1830 that I might try and get all settled but there is an unwillingness in the tenantry to have Mr Close interfere which I can't well account for.'

'I am obliged to go to Down tomorrow but shall be back on Saturday. I hope to find the list here.'

13 October 1834

Letter To W C Quinn Esq, [Secretary to the National Commissioners of Education] 12 Stephen's Green, Dublin, reviewing the situation on the Dungannon Schoolands estate. Blacker's introduction of Green crop farming, together with improved drainage and communications were beginning to show some return. Reference is made to certain tenants who are threatened with eviction. It should be noted that these tenants owed arrears to the previous middleman Murray but had had their debts to Murray paid off by the Commissioners of Education on the understanding that they would work to pay off this loan. Having failed to do so Blacker felt obliged to threaten eviction.

'I have given orders to the Provincial Bank to remit to the credit of the Commissioners [of Education] £1,155 1s. 2d. viz. the £955 1s. 2d. the original stipulation and £200 the amount of the money advanced to help those who required assistance which has been all repaid except a small portion which I think the money I am now getting in for payment of the lime lent will enable me to meet and therefore I think the most satisfactory way is to repay you the whole at once which closes the account and if I was forced to apply for any help next season it will be an argument for granting the same that no loss has arisen at present but I hope I shall not, have occasion to trouble you again.'

'Besides the foregoing I have paid Mr Millar the Rev Dr Buck's agent half a year's tithe to November 1833 and expect to be able to pay him up to November 1834 before closing the account. You will I hope remind the Board that the reduction of the rental and the payment of the tithe leaves a much smaller residue in my hands for the improvement of the estate than what was originally contemplated but I nevertheless think when the state of the property comes to be examined a very great change will be found to exist.'

'I annex a list of those against whom I have ordered notices of ejectment and shall be glad of the approbation of the Board to proceed if necessary. Unless some examples are made they will not work for the arrears.'

New Nos. 14 John Boyle Mousetown, 181 Conn O'Neal Derrylahan,

18 Joseph Doherty Mousetown, 230 Thomas Conly Derrylahan,

38 John Dawson Moustown, 238 George McCan Derrylahan,

43 Patt Quinn Lisnastrane, 296 Francis & James Hagan Derrytresk,

79 James O'Neill Lisnastrane, 307 Mick Tegart Derrytresk,

104 Hugh McGrath Aughamullan, 327 John Campbell Derrytresk,

174 Patt McCan, Aughamullan, 7 James Boyle Turnphor [?].

7 December 1834

Letter from John Mitchell, Markethill, to Messrs Jacob Wrench & Sons, Seed Merchants, London, placing an order for seeds for the various estates managed by William Blacker including the Gosford estate Markethill, Close estate Drumbanagher, Dungannon Schoolands estate Stewartstown [itemised a I.P., the initials of the Scotch agriculturist Pirie]. Orders were also placed for seeds for Rev. F. Gervais's estate at [ ] Co. Tyrone and Mrs E Ross's estate at Rostrevor [?] Co. Down.

£ s. d.

To 28 cwt. Red Clover bags etc per Martha to Waterford £104 0s 0d

To 20 cwt. Red Clover bags etc to Mr Fyfe Arvagh [Gosford estate Co. Cavan] £73 13s 0d

To Sundry Garden Seeds £10 13s 0d

To 10 cwt. Red Clover Bags etc I.P[irie Dungannon Schoolands estate] £36 19s 0d

To 12 cwt. Red Clover bags etc R[ev] F. G[ervais] £44 5s 6d

To 30 cwt. Red Clover bags etc C[lose estate Drumbagher] £110 13s 6d

To 60 cwt. Red Clover bags etc G[osford estate Markethill] £221 12s 6d

To Flower Seeds etc [Mrs] E. R[oss] £2 4s 0d

Off cost of 100 copies of Mr Blacker's address to landlords £604 0s 6d

Off cost of 1 copy of Mr Blacker's Prize Essay £9 11s 0d

Off cost of 200 copies of Blacker's address to tenants [Total] £594 9s 6d

'Gentlemen, I now have the pleasure to remit you the amount of your last year's shipment on my account £594 9s. 6d. in a bill on Messrs Spooner Atwood & Co. London dated the 29th inst and payable 21 days after date, and I beg your attention to the annexed order which I should wish to be executed as soon as convenient by steamer to Belfast except that for Mr Fyfe of Arvagh which must go by Dublin to the care of the agents there putting a Letter To Mr Fyfe into the letter bag of the vessel to advise him on the arrival that he may send carts for the seed.'

I feel interested in enquiring whether the pamphlets I forwarded created any interest among the members of your Society and whether they have appointed any agriculturist upon their Irish estates or intend to act upon the system recommended. They need not have a doubt of the benefit of introducing this sytem upon their property which has been fully proved here and wherever it has been tried.'

PS.

20 cwt Red Clover seed for Mr John Fyfe Arvagh by Dublin

10 cwt Red Clover seed marked I. P[irie, Dungannon Schoolands) estate]

12 cwt Red Clover seed marked R[ev] F. G[ervais]

30 cwt Red Clover seed marked C[lose estate Drumbagher]

60 cwt Red Clover seed marked G[osford estate Markethill]

All these for Belfast

'The above is the quantity of clover seed I wish sent making separate invoices and bills of lading for the different marks and adding insurance so that in case of loss you will recover from the underwriters and have no claim against me.'

30 December 1834

Letter To John McArthur, Randalstown, land surveyor, stating Blacker's difficulty about a further advance of money to McArthur for his work in surveying the Dungannon Schoolands estate at Stewartstown because the proprietors the Board of Education exercise strict control over Blacker as agent. McArthur had been granted the commission to survey the Dungannon Schoolands estate to improve his standing as a surveyor rather than for any real profit. Blacker was a friend of McArthur's father and the commission was something in the nature of a favour.

'Dear sir, I had not time yesterday to write you very particularly. I think from what I shall say of your conduct to the Board they will be anxious to act fairly towards you and it may be satisfactory to you to know that it is my intention to propose to them to allow you £50 (exclusive of the expense of mounting the maps) payable upon your furnishing the duplicate maps for them in the creditable way you wish to execute them and marking off again any stations in the lands that may be obliterated in the bogs. This I suspect must be the case and might require you to visit the place again as all the drains have not been cut.'

'My saying I did not like to advance further money was not from fear the Board would not allow you anything but that they might think I acted with too much freedom in paying anything without their orders as they are rather tenacious in regard to their authority. I should hope you would be satisfied from the foregoing that I am anxious to serve you as far as I can ...'

19 January 1835

Letter To Blacker's cousin Maxwell Close stating the problems that might arise from pressing demands for tithes on the Close estate in the parishes of Ballymore and Killievy. There was something of an agricultural depression in the 1830s with the price of grain remaining low. Rents were thus difficult to collect and tenants looked on payment of tithes to the established church increasingly as an unwarranted burden. There was a movement towards composition of tithes making them a charge upon the landlord leading finally to the Tithe Computation Act [?] 1838. A realistic agent like Blacker greatly feared the power of the tenants to resist tithe payments by combination.'

'My dear Maxwell, I have just received yours of this morning desiring me to go on in regard to the tenantry as I have begun viz. calling upon those which are parishioners of Ballymore for the tithe due at November 1834 and the arrears as per agreement with the Dean and calling upon the tenants of Killeavey parish for the year's tithe due at same time and in failure of payment to proceed by ejectments against both one and the other.'

'Whatever my private opinions may be as to the prudence of your adopting this resolution, you may rely upon a faithful discharge of my duty in strictly obeying your orders but before doing so I think it equally a part of my duty to represent to you in the strongest manner that as Dean Carter is only asking the tenants on other estates for payment of the tithe due at 1833 and by his refusing to answer my letter begging such additional time to be allowed for the collection as would enable me to do the same, he shows that he is determined not to accede to my request and you are thereby left the alternation of either advancing the amount due to him for a short time or continuing to appear to your tenantry in the unpleasant light of having taken part against them by making them pay to 1834 when he is only asking 1833.'

'I say I think it my duty strongly to urge you to advance whatever part of the year 1834 I may be unable to collect before 1 January next (which is the time limited in the agreement with Dean Carter) and allow me now also to call for payment to 1833 as he is doing. Perhaps this may do away some part of the opposition and the matter may blow over without engendering any unpleasant feeling of a lasting nature which if it took place would in my mind destroy the comfort of your residence at Drumbanagher.'

'Since writing to you before I find that Dean Carter has refused to grant the Presbyterian clergymen any exemption any longer from tithe which they have always as clergymen heretofore enjoyed and the last office day they paid down the amount on the counter under feelings of great excitement and went away saying they might thank Colonel Close for making them pay what they never had paid before and would not have had to pay now but for him.'

'In regard to insisting on the full year's tithe of Killeavey I demanded it first under the erroneous impression that Allott was entitled to the whole and though he tells me that he has seen Connell's opinion that by your compounding you are liable to the entire year, I cannot see any legal authority given to you to recover it and therefore repeat my opinion that it is unwise to involve yourself in a dispute without taking the best advice that can be got on the subject.'

'I do not venture to dispute the correctness of the information [you] have received as to what has been done on other estates but I confess every enquiry I have made has led to a direct opposite belief and my opinion is there is not any one estate in the parish in which either landlord or agent has either forced or attempted to force obedience to the composition law with regard to leasehold interests except your own.'

'Having said this much I repeat again I shall follow your orders most implicitly. Perhaps I may be able to succeed but I look on the matter in so serious a point of view that I must beg of you to keep this letter and the others I have written safe.'

'Should I succeed in making the Killeavey tenantry pay you the half year due to McClealand I can't help thinking it will be done without you having a good title to do so. I have desired them to be warned to pay on Tuesday week and shall state your determination to enforce the payment if I find it necessary. I know if the combination is not very strong they will be afraid to oppose you. It is not easy to calculate the strength until it breaks out, but several have paid and refuse to take any receipt along with the rent saying they were afraid to let it be known they had paid ...'.

19 January 1835

Letter To Rev. Dean Carter [Tandragee] concerning tithes.

'I am waiting for your reply to my last letter which I beg may be by return of post and I wish particularly you would be so good to let me know whether you have in any case recovered the arrears and allow the abatements without requiring payment for the year 1833 or whether you have received the latter and allowed the abatement without insisting on the payment of 1834. I am determined as far as in me lies that Colonel Close shall not be put in an invidious position which he certainly now is and it has been asserted to me but which I cannot believe that you have in one case insinuated that the 1834 tithe was demanded by Colonel Close or others in his name for motives of private interest. Previous to entering into any explanation with the tenantry I am anxious to hear from you and requesting to hear from you ...'

27 January 1835

Letter To Rev. Dean Carter, [Tandragee] concerning tithes. 'On enquiry from Mr Mitchell he tells me there was so much delay in sending him the return after the agreement was signed that all the best tenants had paid their rents and of course it has been out of his power to collect the tithe until they have to pay again. We have therefore got but a small portion but shall pay as far as we can but in the first place you will have to send over your clerk with his book to set things right for in the small part we have received [?] your receipt for the tithes we were demanding were produced to amount to £18 16s. 9d. and I suppose there will be the same in the remaining number. I want therefore now to have things made correct and Mr Mitchell will be ready to devote the necessary time on Tuesday next if you will send him over. If that does not suit, say Wednesday but I must get the matter set right before I pay over the money. You are aware our agreement leaves the advantage of any parliamentary measure and I hope there will be some adjustments that will include your case for from wishing to do right I invested [?] myself in more trouble and Mr Close also in this business than you can well believe ...'

16 April 1835

Letter To J McArthur [Randalstown] concerning arrangements for his completion of the survey of the Dungannon Schoolands estate begun by his deceased brother.

'I am not aware that I have personally ever had any agreement with you or your deceased brother. Your brother proposed to execute certain matters for the Board of Education which he left unfinished having in the progress of the work drawn a deal more money than he ever had any reason to expect by his proposal. As I understand the matter and as I believe many of your letters will prove you volunteered to finish out the work he had not completed (fully aware that he had got more money than he was entitled to) from family feelings and without any expectation of remuneration to yourself in which light I have represented it to the Board and stated it as a fit subject for the exercise of their liberality on the work being concluded by the furnishing of proper maps and references which I think you expressed yourself anxious for the sake of your own character to furnish.'

'From the high respect I entertain for your father I have been anxious to serve your brother and yourself. In my representations to the Board I have gone to the utmost verge of what I could say in his favour omitting what perhaps I was not justified in that his own violence of temper and rashness in plunging into an allotment without having previously fully ascertained the claims of the parties laid, in a very great degree, to all the diffculties that he had to encounter. This was I believe (in part) occasioned by his being deceived by the assistant he employed but as he was the responsible person he of course must bear the blame and if I am called in evidence between you and the Board I must give my testimony that the work done was greatly overpaid. Whatever course you mean to pursue must rest with yourself on my own part I wish only to acquit myself of any charge of incivility in declining to prolong our correspondence by reminding you I have repeatedly stated that I was the agent of the Board and could not pay money on their account except in conformity with their instructions and having told you that in consequence of your refusal to furnish the maps and references required by them I had employed another to provide them in order that you might not ultimately lose the balance I had then said all I had to say and had no time to be continually replying to applications for money which you might know I could not comply with.'

'I have now again out of respect for your father gone over the same ground again and have only to request you will be kind enough after perusal to forward it to him and beg to repeat my unwillingness to prolong any discussion upon the subject ...'

PS 'As to what share of the business may have been devolved on you to finish I am not precisely aware but I believe the survey had been finished and the rough maps made and except some corrections that [?] the fair maps and copying, the reference is all that you have had to do. I have always considered you were fulfilling your brother's undertaking and am not aware I have ever made myself personally responsible in any one way but if I have I am perfectly ready to fulfil anything I have engaged and you have only to show me that it is so ...'

23 April 1835

Letter To John Trant, Dover Lodge, Thurles, Co. Tipperary concerning rate of interest payable on a loan to Lord Gosford. In 1830 Trant lent Lord Gosford £30,000 out of a total of £67,000 borrowed to purchase the Graham estate Richhill adjoining the Markethill estate. Trant had been receiving 5 per cent but with the fall in interest rate in 1835 Blacker was trying to force him to accept 4½ per cent under the threat that the mortgage would be taken up by Lady Elizabeth Alexander. This lady was a relation of the Alexanders whose private bank had failed in 1820 and it is of interest that she should have had such a large sum of money on offer. Blacker's threat to reduce the rate of interest was not in fact carried out until 1840. In 1855 Trant still held a mortgage of £25,000 at 4 2/3 per cent on the Gosford Cavan estate.

'I am now offered by Lady Elizabeth Alexander £30,000 on an assignment of your mortgage upon Lord Gosford's estate and if you are still of your former opinion in regard to interest at 5 per cent I trust you will have no objection to receive the amount at next Gale day as His Lordship is willing to let the money remain permanently at 4½ per cent. If you would consent to take the money forthwith I should be well pleased to allow you £50 or £100 in order to make up to you the loss of interest that might arise for the time by being vested in a less productive security. Your attention to this is of considerable importance to Lord Gosford and I therefore make it a particular request you will be so good to let me hear from you if possible by return of post ...'

24 April 1835

Letter To John McArthur, land surveyor at Ballymoney concerning his work in surveying the Dungannon Schoolands estate.

'It is quite impossible for me to enter into all the points in your letter. I wish merely to relieve your mind from the impression that I had alluded to you in saying your brother had been deceived by some of the persons he employed which led very much to the difficulty and annoyance afterwards experienced. I alluded to Mr Whiteside.'

'In regard to your demand I am completely in the dark as to what light you consider yourself in whether as acting for your brother or acting for yourself and I have therefore to beg you will furnish your account as you understand it which is the only way I can see of coming to any clear understanding ...'

28 April 1835

Letter To the Earl of Gosford discussing the finances of the estate in detail. Lord Acheson, heir to the Gosford estate at a yearly allowance of £1500, a proportion of which he was demanding at a time when the Gosford accounts were heavily overdrawn. Expenditure on the Gosford estate regularly exceeded income at this time; extensive borrowing was necessary and the incumbrance on the estate rose from £116,000 to £148,000 in 1840.

Farrell's account was for construction work on the approaches to the new Gosford Castle, which commenced in 1820.

Reference is made to the Tommy Downshire disturbances which occurred on the Downshire and Manchester (Tandragee) estates in the 1830s. There was never any real evidence as to the culprits but they were almost certainly members of the Orange Order who burned the premises and attacked the persons of certain individuals who were introduced as tenants on these estates after the eviction of the previous tenants and who had not paid for the 'good will' of the holdings. Sympathy on the Gosford estates had been counteracted by abatement of rent on land planted with turnips.'

'In the annexed accounts many articles are put under different heads from what I intended, the entries having been made by young lads not very good judges of classification. Where it has appeared to me necessary I have endeavoured to remedy this by subsidary [?] statements but the defective arrangement makes no difference whatever in the final balance. The payment of Mrs Fulton's principal of £2,000 has been an oversight included in the payment of interest. Fyfe's wages [agriculturist on the Gosford estate at Arvagh Co Cavan] and others of that kind should have been made up to a particular period without troubling you with the separate payments.'

'The cost of the back approach has been included in "extra expenses" connected with the house in place of going with Farrel's other expenditure but this is set to right by an explanatory statement as well as some other matters of minor importance.'

'I have passed the items of Mr Dobbin's accounts through your books in order that the account furnished to you might contain a full account of all the year's transactions and show the entire sum borrowed and become a document for general references. Many of the items he charges being payments to sundry individuals, I cannot tell to what class the payments belong or who the parties are. Your Lordship must therefore pay attention to charge them against the persons who received them.'

'The amount of the account of "agricultural improvements" has been much increased by the allowance of the rent of turnip land. This was promised during the time of the alarm in Tommy Downshire's disturbances and had a good effect at that period.'

'I have also to direct your attention to a transfer of £1487 being the items belonging to the Gosford expenditure charged to Lord A[cheson] when the arrangement for his being owner of the place was acted on and charged to him in the former year's settlement but that arrangement having been set aside, and rendered null and void abinit these payments are now charged to your Lordship as they would have been, had no such arrangement ever existed. In making detached statement in regards to these alterations William Wann made an error in bringing a balance to head [?] as Dr in place of his Cr.'

'Had the alterations been regularly entered in the books such a mistake could not have happened but this was not the case as I did not like to make the necessary entries in conformity until I saw that Lord A[cheson] was satisfied with the statements furnished. The transfers however were only from his account to yours and from yours to his, so that if one lost the other was the only gainer. I hope you will find all right now. You get credit for £201 formerly credited him as part produce of the Demesne, and you are debited with the £1487 leaving only to the Dr of Lord Acheson's account such articles as he is satisfied fairly are chargeable to him the particulars of which he has been furnished with.

Your Lordship will perceive by the statement page (80) that I have only entered [?] opposite Mr Farrell's expenditure the sum of £3044 6s. 3½d. whilst his outlay amounts to £4615 8s. 5½d. leaving a balance of £1571 2s. 2d. unprovided for.'

'Your Lordship may recollect that in the first instance I stated it would be wholly impossible for me to spare any funds for the expenditure of this department without letting the interest payments to the judgement creditors fall in arrear, and under your assurance of reimbursement I have made up the above deficiency by the appropriation of part of the rents to the discharge of Mr Farrell's expenses and the consequence I foresaw has taken place, that the interest was unavoidably remained unpaid and being pressingly demanded upon the reduction to 4½ per cent in the rate. I have been obliged to borrow from the bank rather than show weakness at such a time, although heavy interest at the bank is the consequence.'

'When your Lordship turns over the accounts and sees the number of entries and vouchers to regulate, enter and arrange, you will not be surprised at my wishing as far as possible to narrow the number by throwing the payment of the house expenses upon the housekeeper, which your Lordship and Lord A[cheson] seemed to think favourably of, and I myself think it will be really advantageous on many accounts. If I had not considered it so I should not have suggested it.'

Lord A[cheson] now requires some remittances. Since closing these accounts I have been obliged to draw on the bank for Mrs McClelland's interest £292 10s. Od. Mr Trant's £750. Captain Nicholl's £21 18s. 6d. and I am still due to Col. Kelly £225 and £450 will be due 20th of this month which must be paid in a few days.'

'This has been done without my having one farthing to the credit of my Gosford account in the bank but if there is no help for it I will stretch the point still further and try to get them to send a remittance to Lord A[cheson] of the quarter's allowance. I don't expect any rents of any account until November and have no funds to pay for the lime for tenants upon which I may say the payment of the rents most decidedly depends. You will perceive the arrears are much the same as last settlement and are not very great considering that the large sum of £1631 10s. 8½d. has been repaid for seeds lime etc by the poorest part of the tenantry, the sums often payable by each exceeding the actual year's rent. Many payments for Mr Farrell are still due.'

'I wish I could give a more satisfactory account of the state of affairs. As far as regards myself I have done all in my power to serve you and with best wishes for some future amendment ...'

2 May 1835

Letter To W. Cotter Kyle, [Secretary to the National Board of Education] 104 Grafton Street [Dublin] concerning bog improvements on the Dungannon Schoolands estate similar to those inspected by Blacker on the estates of Lord Clondrook in Co. Galway and Mr Fetherston in Co Westmeath. Blacker was indefatigable in keeping abreast of agricultural improvements, in England through publications and in Ireland by personal visits. He acknowledged a particular debt to the Earl of Ormond's agriculturist Mathew Silton.

'I have lately gone to examine the bog improvements making by Lord Clondrook in the county of Galway and by Mr Fetherston in the county of Westmeath and am fully satisfied by adopting the system they are acting on that a very material improvement might be made in the bog of the Dungannon Schoolands but it would require an advance of £300 or £400 to procure the necessary railways and carriages the expense of which however I am quite confident would be well repaid.'

'Something in a small way may be gained by the observations I have made even with the limited means at my disposal which I propose to avail myself of but if the Board would be inclined to go upon the enlarged plan I would immediately employ the engineer who superintended Lord Clondrook's improvements and put the business into the regular course of proceeding. The advantage of the railways and carriages are for carrying clay to lay upon the bog after draining which it is impossible to do without them. The interest upon an outlay of £400 would be only £20 a year and there can be no question in my mind that the advantage would soon be treble that.'

'I beg you will take the earliest opportunity to lay this matter before the Board and in the meantime I shall adopt such measures of improvement as my limited means of proceeding will admit of. I believe the last payment to the late lessees the McMurrays will soon be made which leave a large disposable fund in the power of the Commissioners ...'

26 May 1835

Letter To the Northern Banking Company detailing arrangements for drawing £7,000 against Lord Bangor's estate.

'As I am obliged to go to England on some business I shall thank you to pay attention to Mr John Mitchell's orders to you in payment of the receipts of any of the creditors of Lord Bangor whose interest may be called for during my absence ...'

'PS 13 June: I have just heard from Lord Bangor that on consulting with Messrs Harris [?] and Farquaehar his bankers they recommend you to draw on them for the amount at present required say £7,000 but as I have in the meantime mentioned to Lord B[angor] that it might be as well to send bank post bills for fear the remittance might cross your drafts on the way it appears to me that you should order your friends in London to call on them for the money explaining the circumstance.'

'In the meantime I shall advise Lord B[angor] of the directions I have given you. Mr Craig will give you the necessary orders as to paying off the securities and you will please to follow his directions on that subject ...'

13 June 1835

Letter from William Wann, Markethill, to John McArthur, land surveyor, Randalstown discussing terms for land surveying and quoting letters of his late brother David McArthur and Alexander Richmond.

'Mr Blacker left here for London yesterday evening. Prior to his starting he desired me to send you a copy of a communication which he has had with Mr Richmond viz.

You request me to state to you how and what I usually charge for squaring fences and arranging farms. This I can hardly answer as if I survey the estate or lands to be arranged if not done to a great extent and before I finish my maps and reference I seldom charge anything in addition to the sum agreed for the survey etc etc. If called on after my maps etc are finished I charge by the day but you remember when I surveyed the Graham estate it was to be all arranged and you recommend the late Mr David McArthur to me as a fit and proper person to arrange and finish the maps of same. I, in consequence thereof spoke to him on the subject I wrote a Letter To him of which the following is a copy:

6 May 1831 Mr D[avid] McA[rthur], Sir, having a good deal of business on hands in the surveying and mapping way I must want the assistance of a person who is a proficienct in said business and hearing that you are well qualified as a surveyor and map finisher thereby offered you the sum of 2d. per acre for arranging making out references and making two maps of that part of the Earl of Gosford's property situated in the county of Armagh called the Graham estate in fields according to the rough maps that I will hand over to you. The arrangements must please Mr Blacker his Lordship's agent. Your finished maps must not be inferior to other maps in Gosford office executed by Greig and Hill which I understand you have seen.'

'There must be one sheet or general map and a book of maps with a townland on each leaf with a reference book on a printed form, neat and clean wrote same as the plane you seen in Gosford office. You are to make out the calculations of the rent of each division and average value and amount of each farm. I will make in each field the acreable value of same from which you are to make your calculations. You are to furnish all papers and stationery for maps references etc. ...'

'To which Mr McArthur ret[urne]d me the following answer: Portaferry 16 May 1831, Sir I received your letter on the 6th inst. I do hereby engage to furnish the maps of the estate which you mention in the state which is required by you and on the terms which you propose. I have to observe that I believe more is required than was agreed upon when I saw you in Mr Blacker's office in Markethill. I was not aware that the calculations of rent were to be made by me ...'

'Your brother done the Portaferry work at 6d. per acre and Mr Richmond had only 4d. (after paying per annexed 2d.) per acre for the Graham. You will be able to judge how far your ideas can be maintained in the face of such an agreement under your brother's handwriting.'

'I do much regret the course you have thought prudent to adopt respecting a settlement of the Schoolands survey. Mr Blacker, I am sure, felt every disposition to remunerate you as liberally as he could but when acting for other people he has of course to act with caution. These observations are my own and you will not take any other notice of them ...'

24 June 1835

Letter from George Meara, May Port, Waterford, to William Blacker Esq, Markethill, referring to Murdock one of the Scottish agriculturists introduced to Ireland by Blacker. Reference is also made to the difficulty of finding secure investments outlets for money in Ireland.

'I have the pleasure to tell you that I have been to Holywood and have introduced Mr Murdock to the tenantry who appear to approve highly of the importation and do not exhibit the slightest prejudice against him. Murdock appears a very intelligent reasonable man and I have no doubt in a very short time we shall see very considerable improvements on the estate.'

'I paid Jones the money advanced by him and I lodged at Ball's bank to your account £14 15s. Od. viz. £13 15s. Od. for the books and £1 bonus for Mr Bruce your agriculturist.'

'I am afraid I cannot dispose of the money Lord Bangor owes me in any of Lord Waterford's securities. If you can arrange to have my debt retained to the last I shall be obliged to you. I believe I must mind it in the funds as it is difficult to find good security. Perhaps you may know of a good mortgage for £10,000 which I could lend ...'

20 June 1835

Letter from William Wann to John McArthur, land surveyor, Randalstown, noting that he has had no reply from Mr Blacker in London to his last letter.

'Yours of the 2nd inst I received last night and I beg to inform you that Mr Blacker is yet in London and that I received no reply from him to your last Letter To me. I shall by this evening's post forward yours of the 2nd. He is so engaged with Lord Gosford who is going to America that I am sure [he] has scarcely a moment to devote to any business except his Lordship's. When he will return is unknown ...'

4 July 1835

Letter from William Wann referring to arrangements for Alexander Richmond to complete the survey of the Dungannon Schoolands estate which McArthur had refused.

'I have been absent for some time and have just received yours of the 6th which I have laid before Mr Blacker (who has very lately returned from London). He desires me to say that he communicated to you the footing upon which your account stood with the Board viz. they were to allow you £50 or guineas for furnishing a clear map and reference and your having declined doing so Mr Richmond took it in hands and as soon as the Board examined his map (which I believe is well advanced at present) Mr Blacker expects he will be able to hand you the balance agreeable to the directions of the Board ...'

14 August 1835

Letter To Thomas S McCulloch Esq, Bangor, concerning a dispute between Lord Bangor's Castleward tenants and the mining corporation over land tenure and tenant right.

'There is no objection on my part or on Lord Bangor's part to the terms of the agreement viz. the share in the profits of the mining speculation but my brother under whose advice Lord Bangor always acts stated that the agreement could not be entered beyond the mines which Mr Campbell proposed to work and Mr Tighe when it was suggested was quite of the same opinion as it would be unreasonable to tie up the joint proprietors from doing anything [ ] the rest of their estate which Mr C[ampbell] did not occupy. Whatever portion he proposes to occupy with sufficient works Lord B[angor] has not the slightest wish to keep from him. I am as anxious as you to have the lease executed and think you will agree with my brother and Mr Tighe that the limitation is reasonable.'

I don't at the same time wish to close him up in two narrow limits. Let him take the whole of the townland. We found at Crozier's sundry documents which bore on the commons and some of them showed that part of the funds at least where applied to works which were completed at the expense of the joint estate and would have no doubt whatever that they were joint property and if I recollect there is proof of the fines for use of the commons going to same purposes before they were enclosed.'

'I have given all to Mr Reilly to make out a fuller case and I think it is best for Lord B[angor] to proceed for his own share and to leave you to manage as you like with the other which if it is to be devoted to the use of the town and harbour will be so much for the better of Lord B[angor] but my own opinion is the best way would be to make the tenants at once to the joint proprietors and to pay them their rents and then the corporation without any relinquishment of their claims might decline to embark in a lawsuit with the joint proprietors. This is what occurred to me as being the easiest way for the corporation to get out of their present position and when you consult let me know what you think of it. I suggest this from what you stated of your feelings upon the subject but I have been told since I saw you that Montgomery the attorney had been employed to take defence. If this is the case the law must of course decide the point ...'

14 August 1835

Letter To Alexander McArthur discussing terms for a survey of the Dungannon Schoolands estate.

'I received your letter of the 16th July when in London, and though it is now a month since my return to Ireland I have had scarcely three days here which you may imagine is but very inadequate to bringing up the arrear of business accruing in my absence and must be my excuse for the delay in acknowledging receipt of your letter and attending to its contents.'

'Your son was employed by me upon the same terms as Mr Richmond under whom he acted in squaring part of the Graham estate which Mr Richmond was then employed in and who is still employed by me in similar business and is now engaged in squaring the Cavan estate. He is paid 6d. the English acre and for surveying and lotting out bogs 1s. 6d. per acre. I have never paid him any charge for any second survey. All particulars of potato land etc and valuation is included in the survey charge.'

'Now the entire number of acres included in the farms, even throwing in the cut out bog united to them only amounts to 3,090 acres English and there are 800 acres English of bog. Calculating these quantities at the terms Mr McArthur was engaged on it would only come to £137 5s. 0d. and since he began he was paid £173 8s. 0d. and since his death further payments have been made to the amount of about £14 0s. 4d. which you will clearly see is far more than what could have been claimed.'

'The original cause as well as my recollection serves me of all the annoyance which arose in the business was his having unluckily engaged a Mr Whiteside to assist him whose surveys were found I think incorrect and he dismissed him. Then all the lines that had been marked out had to be changed and new stations made which gave rise to much greater discontent than the first as they thought in many cases they were changed to accommodate others. The working season coming on everything was thrown into confusion and there was not time to proceed regularly and carry on all particulars as he went along and I believe he had repeatedly to go over the work for one purpose or another but for which I cannot hold that I am answerable. However seeing the very great labour and vexation he had and his anxiety to complete what he had undertaken I was very anxious to get him the best remuneration I could and suggested a lotting out of the entire bog though it was not called for at the time as a means of helping him by paying him separately for the lotting it out and continued to advance him money upon my own responsibility of which I believe he was perfectly aware and I think many of his letters stated that he knew he would not be compensated by the payment of the work and I rather am of opinion his brother's letters will show that he undertook to finish the work not with the expectation that it would remunerate him but with a view to establish a character for himself as a competent surveyor.'

'I sent him a memorandum of the maps which his brother was to have supplied to Mr Richmond and he knows that he himself said those which he sent me were such that for his own credit he intended to make a better and upon the faith of this I stated it to the Board and got their consent to pay £50 on the map being furnished. Then he refused to furnish it and in order to secure the allowance I had to get Mr Richmond to make the map as it would leave something over. Mr R[ichmond] charges £24 6s. 3d. and thus the matter remains at present from which you will judge whether I have not done everything in my power to get the best compensation I could ...'

PS 'The sum paid in all was £187 8s. 4d.: additional allowance on furnishing maps £50 [total £237 8s. 4d. This is just £100 over what Mr Richmond's terms would have been. I might perhaps be able to sanction some small charges for stationery postage etc which would swell the balance perhaps to £30 or guineas and I really can do no more.'

'My wish was to serve your son by introducing him to notice and had he lived he would have found that he would have been advanced in his profession by it and the being employed in it has not been without its use to his brother.'

'I am going next week to England but have left directions with Mr Mitchell to open my letters. Since writing the foregoing I find that I had advanced Mr D[avid] McArthur about £20 more than he earned on the County Down survey and in the Graham survey under Mr Richmond which I let him have upon the faith of being repaid out of his further earnings though in the accounts stated he is charged only with the amount charged against the Board and supplied during the work doing for them so that without I stop this money out of the balance due from the Schooland transaction I shall lose the whole of it out of my own pocket.'

28 August 1835

Letter To John McArthur concerning payment for the Dungannon Schoolands survey.

'You may think it intentional in me not answering your letters but it is not so for I really am so much occupied during the few days I stop here [Markethill] that I have not had time.'

'I have taken the earliest opportunity in my power to answer your father's letter and give him such particulars as I think will satisfy him that I have gone as far as in my power to obtain as large a rumuneration for the work done as in my power. I have already called your attention to the fact that I am a mere agent, that the Board was acquainted with the original terms of Mr McArthur's agreement and have at my instance, far out-stepped them and I have gone as far as I can conscientiously proceed.'

'You have also been made acquainted with the fact of two sets of maps done in a workmanlike manner and finished as the other maps at Markethill were to be furnished and that the charge for surveying includes all particulars of potato ground valuations etc and that Mr Richmond is now executing and was executing when your brother was employed under him work of the same kind and was to pay him 2d. per acre for the maps and references and squaring the farms which your brother did as far as could be effected for the leases interfering. There is no use in my writing for I can write nothing else than I have done.'

'There is a balance due to myself by your brother of £20 for advance made to him while he was surveying my brother's estate and working under Mr Richmond over and above the advance of £187 given him whilst engaged at the Schoolands ...'

28 August 1835

Letter To Messrs Coutts & Co, bankers, London concerning a financial transaction of Lord Gosford. After 1835 Messrs Coutts were to hold a larger and larger portion of the incumbrance on the Gosford estate.'

'I am favoured with your account balance £858 14s. 7d. from which I have deducted the amount of Lord Gosford's bill £135 14s. 9d. and have drawn a cheque upon you for the balance £722 19s. 10d. which closes that transaction and when you have any private conveyance that you can safely send me the vouchers I shall be obliged by you doing so.'

'There is one charge of £10 in the name of Sinclair which I believe should be Simkins but the sums agree ...'

28 August 1835

Letter To Rev J. C. Martin, Kileashandra, Co. Cavan, rebuking him for taking legal action for recovery of tithe on Lord Gosford's Cavan estate.

'I am favoured with yours of the 3 November which has been duly followed up by a letter from your solicitor. I don't think either Lord Gosford or any person in his employ have the character of wishing to do wrong to any person and under circumstances of such peculiar hardship on the landlord being obliged to make good the debts of other people and pay the collection and suffer all losses without remuneration and without thanks, it does appear to me that a little more reluctance to have recourse to proceedings (which although the law allows, the legislature never contemplated as they expressly give the landlord time to collect it) might have been manifested but this is matter for your own feelings.'

'As to myself I have to apologise for the delay in bringing the matter to a settlement from the circumstance of my having been absent at first on business and afterwards from ill health for six months and at the time of receiving rents was immediately,coming on I looked forward to that period for the settlement upon my return back a few days since, when Mr Mitchell would be on the spot. However on receiving your very peremptory letter I forwarded it to his Lordship's law agent under whose direction I am bound to act in these matters and he has directed me to comply with your demand and accordingly Mr Mitchell when in Arvagh in the second week of December will pay you the arrears and all the accruing tithes he can collect. It is not my wish to retain any part in my hands but I object to advance money under the circumstances I have referred to ...'

16 November 1835

Letter To Mr W Campbell, Newtownards,' concerning a mining exploration on Lord Bangor's estate in Co. Down at Ballyleidy adjoining an encroaching on Lord Dufferin's estate. Reference is made to a similar search for mineral wealth on the Gosford estate. Since capital expenditure on such exploration was considerable those involved were normally granted 21 year leases of the ground that they were working on.

'I thought Mr Tighe had been preparing the lease for you subject to my brother's approbation and as soon as it is done I shall be ready to get it perfected. I was not aware of the probability of its being likely that you should enter into Ballyleidy Demesne which I am afraid will be disagreeable to Lord Dufferin whom I should be very sorry to annoy but it is too late now to make any reservation in his favour and I trust you will take every care to do him as little damage or annoyance as you can.'

'I could not take it upon me to lease Lord Gosford's mine at less than what Lord Bangor receives but if you would give that and undertake to expend a certain sum in the search I think I could have you a lease perfected before the time for commencing operations. ...'

28 November 1835

Letter To Joseph Gillas, illustrating the problem of discovering the whereabouts and indeed the existence of individuals named in leases for lives. Agents demanded that individuals who have emigrated should testify to their existence before British or foreign consuls. Emigrants who returned on visits to Ireland were permitted to swear an oath that they had met named individuals while abroad. When the life or lives in doubt lived in the British Isles they were requested to sign an affidavit before a clergyman or justice of the peace. The inherent difficulties of the situation resulted in attempts mislead agents as illustrated by this letter although this particularly unsophisticated attempt at deceit could not be sustained for any length of time.

'I am sorry there should be any difference of opinion about the lease of which Samuel McCulloch is the reputed life. I am inclined to think he may be alive from the opinion you seem to entertain but I don't think either you or any other person can be surprised at my looking with suspicion upon any documents coming from a quarter where it is evident to you and every person besides that a forged paper has been forwarded. I have showed you the signatures said, and I believe, sworn to be the signatures of Samuel McCulloch and they are neither written in the same hand nor spelt in the same way. If this can be accounted for in any reasonable way I should be glad it was done. I don't wish to give any trouble whatever or to refuse compliance with anything that would be considered satisfactory evidence under such circumstances.'

'It is now I think more than three years since I stated to you the same thing and have over and over again repeated it, and yet no kind of authentic explanation of such a suspicious circumstance has been afforded me. Therefore you can't be surprised at my doubts. I have no kind of suspicion that you would be any party concerned in anything of the kind but you may be imposed on as well as me and as no person can be supposed to resort a forged document if he had it in his power to forward & true one, I think you will not consider me to be unreasonable in requiring this to be accounted for ...'

30 November 1835

Letter To Alexander McArthur at Castle Carey, ["Carry"] Moville, Co. Donegal concerning settlement of account for surveying work on the Dungannon Schoolands estate.

'I have been almost the entire summer absent and am but very lately returned home since which I have been very much engaged or should have sooner taken notice of your communication upon the subject of your late son's account the particulars of which I annex drawn out according to the terms that he had acted on for my brother and which Mr Richmond acted on when he worked under him and on which Mr R[ichmond] still does business and is at this moment employed by me in the same work in the County of Cavan.'

'You will perceive that the Board have more than paid him for a double survey, of all the arable land. His unfortunate connection with Mr Whiteside was in my mind the great cause of all the trouble he had for if the manured land had been down in the original survey there would have been no necessity for any further trouble.'

'My interest with the Board has been exerted to the utmost that I thought I could justly interfere as I believe your son was fully aware as I think I sent him copy of the representations I had made of his attention to matters that were not strictly within his agreement and I think there are many of his letters expressive of his having undertaken the matter to advance him in his profession more than to make money.'

'I am sorry to find that my conduct in the transaction has met with the censure of his brother who volunteered to finish the work but I have had no interest or selfish motive to make me do wrong or act with unfairness in the business and am glad you seem to view the matter fairly though Mr John McArthur continues to address me in language that is to me perfectly unintelligible and which of course I have nothing to say to in reply.'

'I think the Board will allow me to add £6 for mapping paper and mounting and if you can take it upon yourself to give me a receipt for the balance of the last 50 guineas etc I shall give you a receipt for repayment of my advances and will send you the form required by the Board when I shall remit you the balance ...'

3 December 1835

Letter To Henry Trench discussing arrangements for a son of Bruce, the Gosford agriculturist to take a large neglected holding on Sir Frederick's estate and restore it to full production. The process whereby restoration was to be achieved over a four year period is detailed. The greatest obstacle to improvement was the lack of sufficient cattle to manure the entire holding. Presumably Blacker hoped that the first grain crop would provide a large enough return to buy the first stock of cattle particularly since he advised withholding of rent demands.

'I have [ ] received your letter relative Bruce and have advised his father and him to leave all rent business entirely to the favourable consideration of yourself and Sir Frederick, which they are willing to do but I wish to mention to you what the father says and in which I entirely concur - that it is only expecting impossibilities to think of bringing the farm you speak of into heart, without having more means of making manure that your plan makes practicable. The grazing does nothing in that way and the exhausted state of the arable affords as little prospect in that part. There is no possibility that I see of Bruce being able to succeed in the way you would wish him or that it would be useful for your object that he should do unless he can get an abundance of straw and stock to make manure, which I see no other way of doing but by taking a crop of oats from the lay fields.'

'That farm ought to have 10 head of cattle on it besides a horse to do any good. The old ground would have to be entirely divided to raise potatoes and turnips if manure can be had and the remainder would be only fit for vetches - the seed of which I would propose that you should buy from him to lend out to the other tenants at the same price you lend him the seed now. This and the oats would enable him to get stock and have some manure for next year and by degrees you would see the thing accomplished but until the land is brought into proper heart it would be folly to expect him [to] be able to repay you. He is willing to leave himself entirely in your power and makes no terms as to rent, only don't ask him to repay anything until he gets the land so as to make him able to do it and when he has paid you off all demands, let him be entitled to a lease and don't allow any second grain crop in succession. Therefore he can't take the heart out of the lay, and trusting this will appear reasonable to you. He will hold himself in readiness to leave this when your answer arrives. It will take 4 years to get the land in any degree round and out of the second crop only will he be able to pay rent. He has nothing and all he can meke out of it first will not bring him into stock sufficient. I have written this in a great hurry but I hope you will understand it ...'

7 December 1835

Letter To James Armstrong, Corranary apparently concerning a proposal to build a flax scotching mill on a farm on the Gosford estate. Small local corn mills were in decline as improvements in transport enabled oats to be exported without milling. By contrast the demand for flax scotching mills was increased with the introduction of power spinning to the Lagan Valley.

'I have received your letter as to the building a mill on George Elliott's farm and have no doubt Lord Gosford will be satisfied with you doing so and will be willing at the fall of the present lease to give you the usual tenure of the part you may occupy at that time upon the same terms as rest of the land ...'

PS 'I would strongly advise you sparing no pains to make yourself acquainted with the very best principle now acted on and have the very best machinery W.B.'

17 December 1835

Letter from John Mitchell, Markethill to Messrs Jacob Wrench & Sons, Seedsmen, London discussing terms for supplies of clover and garden seeds for the various estates in Blacker's management. As Blacker's 'green crop' system was introduced over the various estates the order for seeds increased [cf. No. 77] and Blacker sought the best possible discount in order to be able to undercut merchants selling in the local markets. He had the additional advantage of 9 months credit, a privilege that was unlikely to be extended to retailers.

'I now annex a bill for £592 19s. 2d. which according to the annexed statement pays you for this last season's import and I have now to request you may take the first favourable time to ship for me per steamer to Belfast:

All to be insured; all of the best quality of red clover seed.'

'And to Dublin 25 cwt of same marked J. F[yfe] sending by the vessel a Letter To Mr John Fyfe Arvagh [Co. Cavan] to let him know the vessel's name that he may know where to send for them and state in letter the address of the agents and please write to me by the Belfast vessel in like manner.'

'I have also to beg you will execute the annexed order for a customer of mine on best terms.'

'I don't know how it is that your shopkeepers here continue to be able to sell as cheap as mine stands me. I have endeavoured to be regular always in my payments and have recommended you to several good customers and hope you will put me on the best footing in which reliance I remain gentlemen your obedient servant.'

PS 'Please to say whether Italian rye grass is found to thrive in mossy or marshy land and how long it keeps possession of the ground. Quote price of it and trifolium by return of post under cover to The Viscount Acheson M.P. Worlingham Hall, Beccles, Suffolk ...'

24 December 1835

Letter To Henry Trench Esq, Canger [?] Park, Roscrea, Co. Tipperary suggesting that a further holding on Sir Frederick [ ]'s estate [see No. 100] should be offered to a Roman Catholic labourer from the Gosford estate. The £40/£50 which this Roman Catholic labourer could offer would be the net profit from the sale of the tenant right of his Gosford holding after rent and arrears for seeds, lime etc had been deducted. Blacker obviously believed in preaching by example as well as by the word in pamphlet form.

'This will be delivered to you by young Bruce [see No.100] who I hope will turn out well and merit your approbation. I have advised him to get all the exhausted land (which he can't get manure to put in potatoes or turnips) sowed with vetches. I have told him that when you see him firmly [?] taken to the place and doing as you expect that you will have no objection to his breaking up the old pasture which is of little use to any agriculturist as grazing gives no manure.'

'In your last you did not allude to his being entitled to a lease such as you usually give at his present rent. Whenever he has honestly made good his engagement and repaid the advances made him which I am sure he will do and ... if you see him attentive and exerting himself you need not be at all afraid of advancing him whatever he wants for stock which as soon as his vetches are ripe he must get in order to make manure in time to have some rape for next spring as he will I suppose be short of turnips.'

'The other young man waits to have what Bruce says of the place offered him and there is a very industrious man a Roman Catholic that can sell his farm here to advantage and would I think be able to take £40 or £50 with him if there was encouragement for him but I don't think either would like to stir unless they get 20 English acres to begin on. They are both good labourers and understands green crops very tolerably. ...'

PS 'Since writing this I find your place is not convenient to the farm and therefore I send this by post and beg you will send any order that may be necessary as to Bruce as he will be there by the time you receive this W. B.'

6 January 1836

Letter To John Berry discussing terms for a lease of 3 lives for 31 years of a farm and bleach green on the Gosford estate. This illustrates the favourable leasing terms available to those who had money for investment. It is striking to note that a three life for 31 years lease was obviously considered a greater inducement than a lease for 61 years as what has been established in practice that a 3 life lease on the Gosford estate at this time lasted just over 60 years on average. (F. M. L. Thompson and D Tierney Introduction to the Greig Survey p.).

'I am disposed to accept your offer for the late Mr Crawford's house and bleach green and planting containing as per annexed sketch A25.1.11 at the rent you propose of £60 per annum, Lord Gosford to give you a lease of 3 lives or 31 years you laying out £500 within 3 years in substantial improvement or 61 years if you lay out £100 but I have no bog that I can part with by lease but will accommodate you as far as I can paying by the lot like any other tenant. Lord Acheson's approval to this if you are satisfied. I am much disappointed at not having been able to get a larger outlay ...'

January 1836

Letter To W Cotter Kyle Esq, Secretary of the National Board of Education discussing at length improvements on the Dungannon Schoolands estate and the difficulties. Blacker calculated 1½ year's rent on the basis of rent collected plus the value of improvements (set off against arrears) carried out. He had not managed to collect a full year's rent so that the value of the work carried out was greater than a half year's rent. He again emphasised that although the law permitted distraint for non payment of rent it was impracticable because enforcement without consent was impossible.

Blacker encouraged the use of lime by tenants; the cost of quarrying and carting of the lime was at first borne by the landlord and the lime was then burned locally. Lime could only be added to the soil every 7 years and unless manure were added annually the ground soon became impoverished. An alternative to liming was the burning of turf bogs and the resulting ash had a similar effect to lime in the first year.

The impending poor law legislation did not find favour with Blacker who considered it would increase pauperism whereas in his view it was more desirable in the interests of law and order to keep the poor employed as would have been the case if his 'green crop' system of husbandry became widely accepted.'

'I have now to forward the account of the Dungannon Schoolands for the past year which on examination will I hope prove correct and satisfactory. You will perceive that between work done and cash paid there is above a year and half's rent accounted for and the account would have been still greater had it not been that I relied on the punctuality and promises of a very considerable number of the tenants and did not put them to the expense of an ejectment process and the period having been thus allowed to pass over for having recourse to that remedy no fewer than [ ] have not paid one farthing except the work which they did in the summer. I have put a cross to their names and from a great many others I have been obliged to receive payments much short of what I should otherwise have.'

'Although there is a manifest improvement in the habits and manners of the tenantry, it cannot be expected that in all cases an entire and thorough change can in so short a period be effected nor is the law yet so strong or the dispositions of the people so amenable that recovery of rent can be effected by the common method of distress. It would neither be entirely safe to attempt it nor would a person venture to purchase an article offered for sale. Under such circumstances to render it imperative on me first to obtain a Board's order for proceeding by ejectment would be in fact to render me completely incapable of managing the property or fulfilling the duties of my situation. I am at all times perfectly willing to be called to account for the measures I adopt and I therefore hope the Board will not refuse to place that confidence in my prudence which is really necessary for their own interest and which is in every other instance given to me by my employers.'

'In the course of this last season considerable improvement has been made in the formation of roads and cutting new drains in the bog. In this respect considerable advantage has been derived by procuring a man from Mr Fetherston of Grifferstown to point out the mode adopted by that gentleman under the direction of the Chat [?] moss engineers and the agriculturist Mr Perie [Pirie] is now going to Grifferstown and Lord Clonbrook's to make himself acquainted with the use and advantages of the railway previous to the arrival of that portion which the friends at my disposal will enable me to procure from the effect of which in facilitating the reclaiming of the small portions of bog annexed to a great many of the farms I anticipate the greatest benefit will accrue. But as its employment will be limited to the inland improvements I have been obliged to build a small sized boat for the purpose of supplying clay and lime to the lots adjoining the Blackwater river which lie at too great a distance to be accommodated with these articles in any other way and without them improvement is impossible.'

'In the arable land all the new ditches have now been made but there are a few to whom I have not all [?] payment for them on account of the old fences being still unlevelled.'

'The appearance of the estate is very much improved and in some of the adjoining districts the tenants have been so struck by it that they have squared their fields of their own accord and the agriculture of the entire neighbourhood has undergone a most decided improvement. Clover and vetches and soiling [?] of cattle which were a few years ago entirely unknown are now coming into very general use. In regard to the introduction of turnips the opinion of even experienced farmers is very much divided and I do not insist on their cultivation leaving it to themselves to follow their own inclinations after making trial of each and I find in the upper townlands where the soil is of a very sandy nature the turnip crop is much esteemed but in Aughamullan where the soil is a stiff clay the potatoe crop is preferred.'

'The tenants will in the ensuing season have more time to bestow upon increasing their crops and the general cultivation of their farms which has been greatly retarded by the building of so many new houses and the levelling and making ditches which has been exceedingly laborious. I therefore look forward with a confident expectation that a greater appearance of comfort will shortly be visible.'

'The lending of lime has been of the greatest advantage. In fact had it not been for that practice the rents would not have been paid. The use of it is now beginning to be understood and a great anxiety to get it now has taken place of their former indifference.'

'The Board will recollect that on my representation last year a grant fo £50 to 50 guineas was made in favour of Mr John McArthur (brother to the deceased Mr David McArthur who had undertaken the survey and died pending its execution) on condition of his furnishing a proper map. At the time I concluded that he Mr J. Mc[Arthur] would have been well satisfied with the allowance but he in this respect disappointed my expectations very much. On summing up all matters it appeared that a very small balance would be coming to him. He therefore refused to furnish the map and I was obliged to employ Mr Richmond to do it, thinking in the end he would be glad to get what would be coming to him but in this also I have been disappointed and have been exposed to a very annoying and vexatious correspondence, threats of law proceedings and very abusive language which I considered very unmerited on my part and what course he may ultimately adopt from the apparently violence of his temper it is quite impossible for me to say.'

'The map I have sent up for your use and shall thank you to return me the rough maps now in your possession which is requisite I should have for the settlement of any disputes that may arise. I have by accident discovered two or three errors made in the survey which I shall be obliged to send Mr Richmond to examine into.'

'A considerable improvement appears visible in the produce of the bog and I hope by degrees as the roads can be improved a further increase will take place. Materials however either stone or gravel are not to be had except at a great distance and I find it very difficult to keep them in any tolerable order.'

'Before concluding this report it will however be necessary to say something in regard to the cotters. The success of their location naturally forms a subject of great interest at present when a provision for the poor has become so general a matter of discussion. In this respect the Board will recollect that a number of very poor people whose miserable state his Grace the Lord Primate had an opportunity of observing were settled as cotters upon the property and no other place of providing for them occurred except to assist them in bringing into cultivation small allotments of land then lying in a state of nature, some part deep bog and other places almost entirely sand. There have been in all 49 families provided for. The allotment in some cases being of so bad a nature as not to yield a sufficient foundation for a mud walled hut and some of them actually fell after being built and others were with difficulty secured by being propped up.'

'In these allotments which lie along the Blackwater river the most of them have been inaccessible to either lime or clay and of course very little improvement is visible and the houses are very wretched but the people themselves are healthy and generally speaking contented and in good spirits and when they are supplied this year with clay by means of the boat now provided I expect they will be made in some degree comfortable.'

'In the other allotments more inland several very snug cabins have been built. Considerable improvement likewise has been made in their land and great appearance of industry exists among them.'

'On referring to the accounts I perceive that the greatest sum the Board has ever been in advance on account of these locations amounted to no more than £123 13s. 8d. of which £76 2s. 9d. was to be repaid by instalments in seven annual payments and £47 10s. 11½d. by payments at appointed time from 6 to 12 months. Of the latter nothing remains due except one sum of £1 2s. 10½d. and of the instalments £50 3s. 9d. remains due being only £5 16s. 1d. more than the utmost farthing which could have been demanded (and for this a reasonable cause exists) and I consider there is no doubt whatever of the entire being paid within the limited time. For this trifling advance therefore on which the mere interest will only be lost an annual income of £66 13s. 2½d. has been created from nothing which I consider in a very short time will be most amply secured and the people themselves I believe this moment are ready to admit they never had such a prospect before of attaining to any tolerable degree of comfort - a state of things which when contrasted with the miserable situation they would have been reduced to by a different mode of treatment cannot fail I think to be a source of very great satisfaction to every member of the Board and fully proves from the annual income obtained by the location, with what benefit to the proprietors of the soil, the comfort and independence of the numerous cotters, almost everywhere existing, might be promoted. No situation offering less encouragement to the settler than the allotments on the Schoolands afford could I am persuaded anywhere be found as they are in general as bad almost as imagination can picture.'

'I should think the balances above mentioned which now remain due on the cotter's account should be brought down to be hereafter accounted for and the balance of the loan account transferred to the general account which will make matters more clear and serve to supply the expense of the railway.'

'On an inspection of the loan account it would appear that a large balance had been in my hands for the past year but the fact is not so at all. The outgoings form an offset [?] thereto, but they are kept in the general account not to confuse the other, in payments on account of limes, seeds, boat, labour etc etc.'

'I enclose an application for a school house and beg to remind the Board that I have not received any instructions since this subject was formally brought before them. The population being entirely Roman Catholic it will be necessary to keep in mind that a master of that persuasion will I am afraid be indispensable to the attendance of the children.'

'I also beg to mention that I have been applied to by the committee of the Stewartstown Dispensary requesting an increased subscription to that establishment.'

'In compliance with the Board's order I have obtained a certificate of the tithe payable by the composition to Dr Buck which I conclude it will be unnecessary to apply for hereafter. I do not think it necessary to trouble the Board with the account of all the particular advances made to the cotters but I send the items of a few cases in schedule A which will show the nature of them and the rest can be furnished without difficulty if required. ...'

18 January 1836

Letter To William Campbell Esq, Ballyatton, Newtownards discussing terms for a mining contract on a plot on the Gosford estate.

'I should be afraid in Lord Gosford's absence to make a worse agreement for him than for Lord Bangor as Peers are not much skilled in different quantities of ore and as you, if I recollect right, are not very strictly down as to laying out money no very great injury can arise to you if you contract to give too great a share but Lord G[osford] would be completely bound if it turned out that he got too little so I hope you will be content to agree on same terms which I have no doubt his Lordship's acting attorney will ratify ...'

3 February 1836

Letter To Samuel Cleland Esq, Stormont, Belfast referring to composition for tithes on townlands in the Close estate Drumbanagher. Blacker suggests that he should consider taking a tenancy on lands on Lord Bangor's estate adjoining his own property.

Townlands in the parish of Killeavey on Colonel Close's Drumbanagher estate:

Drumbanagher, Killree [?], Killabodagh and Lissummon.

'I am favoured with yours of 26 ulto and shall make Mr Allott refund to me what I have overpaid him and as soon as I get the rent account closed will be able to settle with you for the composition of the above townlands which are all that Mr Close has in the parish of Killeavey.'

I many time wondered why you did not apply to become tenant for the land adjoining you belonging to the joint Bangor Estate ...'

3 February 1836

Letter To James Reilly Esq, Scarva, Loughbrickland, Co. Down (agent for Lord Downshire's estate) commenting on proposals affecting Lord Bangor's estate.

'My dear Reilly, perhaps I have mistaken the nature of the bill to be obtained by the Bawn [?] Company. From what you say it is merely to enable them to treat with the proprietors; but if it is to give them a power of referring the matter to a jury which I must say would appear to me a necessary power for ensuring to them the attaining their object, I state plainly I would strongly advise Lord B[angor] not to allow his property to be made subject to any such clause without a previous settlement being made.'

'I have a letter from Crozier saying he would be home before the assizes, which being an answer to my proposal that he should act for us along with Mr Tighe I conclude to be assenting thereto.'

'I should wish to hear ["have"] from you fully as to the nature of the act and whether any such clause was in it, with as little delay as possible ...'

17 February 1836

Letter To James Pratt Esq, Dublin concerning the detail of a rent arrear.

'Mr Pratt lodged with Messrs Ball & Co on the 2nd of October 1834 half a year's rent to May 1834 since which period he has made two similar lodgements which clearly shows there is half a year of an arrear. The error perhaps is in Messrs Ball & Co giving the receipt to November 1835 instead of the one to May 1835 as they had the two at the same time for collection.'

'It appears from above that you have allowed the two half year's to overtake each other and the May 1835 receipt must remain with Ball & Co still unpaid.'

'When the payment was made by you there was a year due and you have got by mistake from Mr Dudgeon the last half year in place of the first. Your own cheque book however will show that from October 1834 above mentioned the payments are short the half year. It was only after repeated applications that your payment was made 20 May 1835 to the preceding November and my directions to Ball & Co if I recollect right were then not to take less than the year's rent which you had allowed to become due but they did not attend to the orders I gave which has now led to this occasion of explanation.

However there cannot be any difficulty in clearing it up as if you have got the November 1835 receipt you will find you want one of the preceding. I shall be glad how soon you are able to satisfy yourself on the subject as there will be a year now due first May ...'

29 April 1836

Letter To Joseph Gillis concerning one Samuel McCullough named as a life in a lease for lives on the Gosford estate.

'On examining more particularly the documents you left with me I see there is not only a difference in the signature of Samuel McCullough in all the 3 papers but I perceive there is also a very evident difference in Kirk the Prothonotary's signature. I have therefore determined on sending them to the American consul to be returned by him to the state for investigation and pending this delay out of respect for you I am willing, on the part of his Lordship, to lodge the money in any safe hands you may approve of but I cannot with propriety pay over any money to you as the power of attorney to your nephew is completely annulled by the different signatures of the Prothonotary's name.'

'It adds to the mystery in which this transaction is involved that there should be no letters or applications produced from the parties who are really entitled to the profits now for several years back. One would naturally suppose they would write themselves as a proof of their being alive and to identify their signatures.'

'I beg you will not consider that I in any way suppose you to be concerned in the most remote degree with the documents that have been forwarded to you. I have no doubt whatever you are satisfied the parties are alive but I must say the documents do not in my mind prove it, but to show how unwilling Lord Gosford is to have any appearance of being unreasonable in his demands, I am ready to pay you the money upon your bond to be answerable to me for the issues and profits of the property from the death of Samuel McCullough in case it shall not be made clearly appear that he is alive.' [This letter was never sent].

19 August 1836.

Letter To the American consul in Dublin on the subject of one Samuel McCullough.

'Having reason to doubt of the existence of a person of the name of Samuel McCullough who had been a life in a lease granted by the late Earl of Gosford and had gone to America many years ago I require the representatives of the lessee to prove the said Samuel McCullough to be alive and accordingly in the year 1828 I received, as agent to his Lordship, a document purporting to be an affidavit made by the said Samuel McCullough before William McCoy who describes himself as a justice of the peace for the County of Mifflen State of Pennsylvania and is dated 31 December 1827 to which is annexed a certificate signed "By the Governor" (this in print - Calvin Blythe, Secretary of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania - which certificate states that the said William McCoy was a magistrate and that William Mitchell who certifies as Prothonotary is really the Prothonotary of that County. Subsequently a new set of documents of a similar kind was forwarded date 21 November 1832 Juniata [?] Company and signed by James Butler who is certified to be a magistrate of that county by William H Kirk and Kirk is certified to be Prothonotary by James Trimble Deputy Secretary.'

'After this another set of documents are forwarded being a power of attorney said to be executed by the said Samuel McCullough before William Arbuckle of Juniata [?] County who is likewise certified by William W Kirk to be a magistrate which certificate is signed by said Kirk as Prothonotary. Now it is plain to be seen that each of the three signatures of Samuel McCullough's name are written by different hands and are differently spelled and the two signatures of Kirk the Prothonotary are likewise plainly written by different people so that there can be no doubt that some imposition has been practiced.'

'No letter has been produced from either of the McCulloughs who are supposed to be entitled to the profits of the property and on account of the evident difference of the signatures the tenants have attorned to Lord Gosford for some years past but his Lordship is now threatened with an action by parties who are acting under the power of attorney alluded to and under the foregoing circumstances.'

'I beg to apply to you as American consul to know what steps can be taken to establish the truth and punish the parties who have practised the imposition should that turn out to be the case. Should you not feel yourself called on to interfere in this matter perhaps you would be able to procure the correct signature of Kirk the Prothonotary which would clear up in one respect the validity of the documents...' [This letter was never sent].

19 August 1836

Letter To Joseph Gillis reporting that the American Consul in Dublin has advised him to place no confidence in any of the documents from America which are not certified by the British Consul in the case of one Samuel McCullough.

'... What I require therefore on the part of Lord Gosford is a letter from Samuel McCullough and the executors of his deceased brother James who are I believe the persons entitled to the issues and profits of the lease, and let the handwriting of both letters be verified by respectable people before the British Consul and upon their order being reduced to pay the money to you, I shall do so. I hope this will be satisfactory...'

September 1836.

Letter from John Mitchell, Gosford Office, Markethill to William Peebles Esq, solicitor, 17 North Frederick Street, Dublin illustrating a further difficulty arising over a life names in a lease for lives. Where the life no longer existed, or was in doubt, the sub-tenants were required to pay rents direct to the proprietor. Sub-tenants paid rents valued at current prices to the lease holder who on a much reduced original rent enjoyed a clear surplus. It was this sum to which the proprietor felt entitled when a lease expired and any period of evasion or fraud deprived estate revenue of this increase.

'I see by your Letter To me of the 31st March last that you say Hans Peebles the life I enquired after was alive. This you have not as yet given me satisfactory account of though you have had full time to do so. On that account I must conclude that the life alluded to is dead. I will therefore be obliged to desire the tenants in possession of such premises as Hans Peebles was the life of, to pay you no more rent until you satisfy me with the necessary proof that Hans Peebles the life named in the leases is actually living.'

'I also observe in your Letter To me of the 16th of May last that you claim the rent of the farm held by Mrs Beally [?] in Cornecrew up to November last 1835. This demand of yours appears to me rather odd indeed when it is well known that Thomas Falls of Aughnacloy the last life of the farm held by Mrs Beally is dead upwards of 8 years ago and you have been receiving the rent of that farm for 6 years that you have no right to whatever all by my neglect in not looking after the lives in proper time. From this forward I find I must take more care in such cases.'

'The last time I had the pleasure of seeing you and your brother here on enquiring at you about Hans Denniston who formerly lived in the County Longford and is a life named in some of your leases you told me he was gone to America. If so I will feel obliged by your acquainting me in what place of America does he reside and what business he follows and any information you can give of him. I will also feel obliged by your letting me know in what town, parish and townland and county Hans Dennison [?] lived in at the time he left Ireland for America ...'

21 September 1836

Letter from William Peebles, solicitor, Dublin to John Mitchell, Gosford Estate Office, Markethill in reply to a letter of enquiry about the life of Hans Peebles.

'I am this morning in receipt of your letter and hasten to reply. It was my wish and intention to have seen you long since with reference to the subject of yours but since term was over I have been by circumstances over which I had no control prevented going to your neighbourhood where however I will be before the middle of October and furnish you as far as I can with any information you require.'

'In the meantime there will be no occasion to serve any notice on tenants. Such a course is quite unnecessary. If Lord Gosford be entitled to the lands he shall have them at once. If not entitled the service of the notice would be productive of loss to my brother and self which I am sure is not your object.'

'With regard to Hans Peebles in spring last I had a letter from one of his family stating his existence. This letter was mislaid in Dungannon but I will be able to satisfy you of the fact. Thomas Falls has been dead this some years I am very well aware but whether he was or not the last life in Beally's farm as I never saw one of the leases, I cannot say. Hans Denneson formerly lived in Longford County, latterly until he embarked for America he resided in various parts of Dublin during which time I frequently saw him. The last residence I was aware of his having was in the neighbourhood of the Vitriol Works on the North Strand. He and his family left this for New York I believe but whether they remain, are located there I am not aware. He was of no business nor profession. Of him also I can get you any information when in the North. Hoping this letter will be satisfactory until I see you ...'

22 September 1835

Letter To William Norton, Tambit discussing the prospects for establishing industrial concerns on the Gosford estate in Co. Cavan. Norton later established a bleach green at Drumnawaul Co Cavan. This green remained remarkably prosperous even during the crisis of the Great Famine when workers employed at the green managed to acquire as many as seven small holdings each from less fortunate neighbours.

'I am sorry to be obliged to resist your wishes in regards to settling at Arva unless you are willing to occupy the house and farm as tenant at will but I will give you a lease of the corn mill reserving the command of the water to the lower fall of the three summer months.'

'I must look forward to getting a person with capital to go extensively into the flour distilling or spinning business but yours may pass away before I accomplish this and you may remain perhaps undisturbed without my being able to turn the place to those or any other useful purposes but the power I must retain.'

'There is no place where linen yarn spinning could be better carried on. Your children weavers and a flax country. One mill of this kind is said to have made in Belfast £40,000 in one year and there are now mills building of this kind in every direction.'

'In regard to wheat there is no part of Ireland in which if a flour mill is established there will not be a plentiful supply grown. Caledon mill made a wheat country of all that neighbourhood. This year indeed it is turned to flax but that is casual. I would recommend your attention to linen spinning and should be glad to deal with you ...'

25 October 1835

Letter To the Lord Primate, Armagh who has been asked to intercede in settling the dispute with the McArthurs over payment for a survey of the Dungannon Schoolands estate.

'My lord, I really regret that your Grace or the Board should have any trouble arising out of any transaction I had anything to say to but I have not been able to avoid it in the present instance.'

'The complianant Mr John McArthur is brother to Mr David McArthur who was originally employed by me in the survey of the Dungannon Schoolands and who died before the work was completed. With John McArthur I never had any agreement at all further than at his brother's death he volunteered to complete the work chiefly as I think in the expectation of its being the means of advancing himself in his profession or from a wish that a work begun by his brother should not be left unfinished but without any stipulation for his own remuneration and as he had assisted his brother in the survey and of course knew something of the business I was glad to avail myself of his services in the very unpleasant situation in which things were left at his brother's decease.'

'The difficulties of the undertaking in which I had embarked I think will appear from my correspondence with the Board and in consideration thereof I was permitted to continue my advances for the work to the extent of £50 or guineas additional and after giving credit for the work to the greatest extent that I can with any propriety bring against the Commissioners there will remain to the present complainant not more than a few pounds. It is impossible for me to say what portion of the work has been done by him but the impression on my mind is that he is out of pocket by the transaction. At the same time the money already charged to the Board and the further sum of £50 will amount to more than what I could have got the work done for and a great deal of more than the terms upon which Mr David McArthur entered upon the execution of it.'

'My recommendation would be the Board should reply that in the present state of the matter they considered the first thing to be done was for him to furnish his account as the representative of his brother for the work he had undertaken and to give credit therein for all sums advanced in account thereof and that if he had any engagement or demand on his own account that he would likewise state it for their information ...'

6 December 1836

Letters to Messrs Begbie & Young, 27 Mark Lane, [London] discussing discount terms for a supply of clover and garden seeds in bulk for use on the various estates managed by Blacker.

'I want to purchase the following parcels of best red clover seed for my different employers to be shipped by steamer to Belfast except the parcel marked Fyfe which must go to Dublin and a letter directed to Mr J Fyfe, Arvagh [Co. Cavan] must be sent by the vessel to be posted in Dublin to inform him of its arrival.'

'I have hitherto been supplied by Messrs Wrench & Sons but I have latterly found the only advantage I had in dealing with them was that they allowed twelve months credit which is a considerable convenience as I lend all this seed out to the tenants and take payment at this time of year by which means I am kept out of advance of money. They now say they would charge me for my best quality 90s. 0d. and unless there was a saving of 12s. 0d. per cwt. for short payment or 8d. 0d. per cwt your giving me same credit as they do I would rather you would cancel this order as to advance money is not an agreeable thing to Irish landlords and they are not willing unless some very great advantage is gained by it. The quality must be the very best. If any failure took place it would ruin all the estates under my care and would destroy me altogether so I beg your best attention. There is often seed sold chemically prepared but by putting the seed into a glass of vinegar it quickly discharges the colour. None of that so prepared will grow. ...

28 December 1836

Letter To Messrs Dickson & Co, Waterloo Place, Edinburgh placing a further order for seeds.

'You must deliver the seeds free on board at Belfast and upon this undertaking you may send the following quantities putting up each mark separately:

6 bushels of yellow bullock 2 bushels white globe 1 bushel red Norfolk 1 bushel purple Topped Swedish 1 bushel Dales Hybrid.

This parcel directed to Mr John Mitchell Markethill - (1 bushel red topped yellow bullock 1 bushel yellow Aberdeen 1 bushel Dales Hybred ½ bushel White Globe ½ bushel Red Topped White Norfolk 4 bushels Italian Rye Grass. This directed to Mr William Taylor at Castleward near Downpatrick).

(1 stone of yellow Aberdeen 1 stone of yellow Bullock 1 stone of Purple Topped Swedish 1 stone of Dales Hybrid 1 stone of White Globe 1 stone of Red Norfolk 2 bushels of Italian Rye Grass). This to be sent to Dublin with a letter for Mr J Fyfe Arvagh and parcel directed to him.'

'All these seeds I shall rely on your sending true to the quality. Complaints have been made to me this was not the case last year ...'

10 January 1837

Letter To Messrs Ridgway & Sons, Markethill, discussing publication in pamphlet form of extracts from Blacker's pamphlet The Claims of the Landed Interests, with specific reference to the Corn Laws and currency which were to be raised in the next Session of Parliament. Blacker argued against the repeal of the Corn Laws because upon this depended the security of incumbrances on Irish estates. His views on the effects of the revised currency regulations are to be found in his submission to the Commission appendix 6.

'As the question of the Corn Laws and currency are likely to be much agitated during the next session of parliament I have been applied to, to publish in separate pamphlets the chapters in the Claims of the Landed Interests which refer to those subjects with such further observations as the present existing state of affairs might suggest. I have also been applied to to review M. Lefurie's [?] letter. I wish to know whether if I complied with any or all of these whether you would be willing to do what I understand is customary viz. the bookseller is at the expense of the publication; the first of the sale goes to indemnify him and whatever is produced afterwards to go half and half between the publisher and writer, the half of the profit to be in lieu of all charges of sale etc by the former. Will you let me have a line by return of post under cover to viscount Acheson MP ...'

PS 'Be pleased to say whether any copies of The Claims [of the landed interests] continue to be called for.' WM B.

17 January 1837

Letter To Messrs Wrench & Sons [seedsmen London] accepting their terms for an order for seeds for various estates.

'I have just received yours of the 16th. The price you quote is exceedingly high but as you state there is no chance of getting it lower, I must submit and underneath I send you the marks and quantity with the places to be shipped to and shall be glad how soon the order is executed. Insurance to be effected as usual fully to cover your invoice ...'

20 January 1836

Letter To Messrs Begbie Young, [seedsmen] 27 Mark Lane, London concerning his order for seeds.

'I send you the sample you desired I would procure and as the season is advancing I enclose a Letter To Messrs Wrench and Sons that if you cannot execute the order at my limits, you may put it into the second post and save further loss of time (other part of letter omitted by Mr Blacker's desire).'

PS 'Be careful to destroy my Letter To Wrench and Sons in case you execute the order as it would not answer me to have both executed. The shipment must be insured to full amount. Refer to my letter of 28 December for limits of price. I should think the difference of 4s. 0d. on limits would pay you good interest for allowing some credit.'

19 January 1837

Letter from Lord Acheson eldest son of the 2nd Earl of Gosford to the agent William Blacker discussing the refusal of one Dougan to accept the settlement of a dispute in the normal way by the decision of two impartial men. The landlord's ability to visit his displeasure upon a recalcitrant tenant was very real in an age when patronage was widespread and leases were subject to renewal.

'My dear Blacker, I dislike this business of Atkinson & Dougan very much. The other man Mitchell does not seem to be going to law and if possible we ought to prevent Dougan doing so. He has no right to complain of the decision of two impartial men and if he refuses to agree to this it must be considered as vexatious on his part.'

'It clearly appears to me as if he thought he had Mr Atkinson in his power and was determined to punish him for having, as he says, made a bargain too advantageous to himself with Pepper. I think it will be as well that Dougan should know that his going to law is altogether contrary to my wish and that Lord Gosford would be much displeased at such a proceeding on his part especially under such circumstances when an arbitration is agreed to by the other side. You might send for Dougan and tell him that it is my wish. I am pretty sure that my father would do this were he now here ever yours.'

January 1837

Letter from William Blacker to [William] Dougan [Lisdrumchor] concerning his threat to go to law in defiance of arbitration in his dispute with one Atkinson. "Mr Dougan, I enclose you a note I have received from Lord Acheson on the subject of your dispute with Mr Atkinson. It has been reported to me that you have taken it upon you to say that "you have got me on your side" in this affair. I can scarcely however believe that you could have used such language or anything like it for nothing can be more contrary to truth. I never make myself a party in anything but I consider you decidedly wrong in going to law and you are wrong in asserting that you were suffering under Mr Atkinson's old bargain and you are wrong as to the measurement of your farm. I therefore strongly recommend you to get the matter amicably settled. Mr Atkinson does not know of this letter as I think it better you should appear to go forward of your own accord which will tend to restore good feeling between you, your well wisher.'

26 January 1837

Letter To Messrs Dickson &. Co, Waterloo Place, Edinburgh giving an order for a further supply of Italian rye grass seed.

'I am favoured with yours of the 14th ulto with invoice of seeds. I have now to request you will send 5 bushels more of Italian rye grass addressed to Mr W Taylor Castle Ward, Downpatrick and send 35 bushels more addressed to Mr John Mitchell, Markethill.'

'I will thank you to give me the best information you can collect what kind of soils the Italian rye grass is best suited to particularly whether it will do upon cut out bog when you come near the clay or upon the rotten black peaty soil without mixture of clay.'

'I want the seeds sent with the greatest expedition as the sowing season will be on before it can be here ...'

2 February 1837

Letter To [ ] Ward Esq, guardian to one of the heirs to the Bangor estate. This estate consisting of lands both at Bangor and at Castle Ward near Strangford was held jointly by Colonel Ward and Lord Bangor. There was a dispute over land which Colonel Ward claimed but which Blacker asserted should have been in the hands of Lord Bangor's son and heir and the proposal was that the revenue accruing from this should be used for poor relief.

'Sir, that no blame may rest with me in case the disagreeable alternative of the law should have to be resorted to, I beg to mention that it is now nearly 12 months since I called the attention of your law agent Mr Tighe to the fact that sundry portions of the joint estate of Bangor were held by the representatives of the late col. Ward without any title thereto and requested him to examine the matter and let the property to be given up or else the justice of the possession shown.'

'I gave him at that time through Mr Reilly, documents to show that some of the holding did not belong to the minor particularly the Charity lands and Baxter's holdings. These lands Lord Bangor's counsel has given a decided opinion are vested in his Lordship for charitable purposes and has desired that the proofs shall be handed over to the Commissioners of Charitable Bequests for them to prosecute for. If I do this the minor Ward will be made accountable for the proceeds for perhaps 40 or 50 years but this is not a matter I wish to involve him in and my demand upon Mr Tighe is merely that Lord Bangor shall be paid what he ought to have had received since his accession to the title and which the poor of the Castle Ward estate have been deprived of in his time. I can get no kind of satisfaction from Mr Tighe and I have at length been obliged to write him the annexed letter which I mean to follow up by handing over the proofs to the solicitors of the Commissioners of Charitable Bequests and wash my hands of the matter. I shall wait your answer by return of post ...'

Letter 'sent for delivery under cover to Thomas S McCulloch Esq, Bangor.'

Endorsed 'Above letter [No. 124] to Mr Tighe copied at foot of above.' W. W[ann]. 8 February 1837

Letter To R P Tighe Esq, 20 Middle Gardner Street, Dublin concerning the dispute between the owners of the Bangor estate [see No.123].

'I have been consulting others upon the propriety of my suffering myself to be put off from time to time without any satisfaction as to the course to be pursued by you in regard to giving up the holdings which you can show no title to in the Bangor estate, and the opinion I have received is that nothing would be done unless by proceeding to extremities. It is now nearly a year since this thing was first urged upon you and I have since written you I suppose fifty times upon the subject without being apparently a bit more near the amicable settlement I wished for. Feeling myself therefore incurring a responsibility which I have no authority to subject myself to I make this last application to you for a decision and if it is as fruitless as the former you will be hereafter relieved from my correspondence.

8 February 1837

Letter To the Royal Bank of Ireland, Dublin concerning lodgement of interest due to John Trant who held a mortgage against the Gosford estate.

'I believe it is with you that Mr J Trant keeps his account and I therefore beg to mention to you that I have lodged a credit with the Provincial Bank 60 William Street for the payment of his receipt for £675 for interest due him by the Earl of Gosford. I do not write to him as it would occasion unnecessary postage ...'

10 February 1837

Letter To George Carr Esq, Mount joy Square, Dublin discussing interest rates which were rising because of a restricted money supply fixed on gold.

'I have had a credit lodged for the payment of your receipt for £315 at the Provincial Bank No. 60 William Street [Dublin] for some days past but I have been so ill with influenza I have not been able to acquaint you of it. There is no doubt that unless some preventive means are adopted that interest must come back to its old rate but I trust on consideration you will agree with me that until it is seen what course things will take it would be rather hasty to alter existing regulations for the temporary financial difficulties which have as yet taken place. Interest had long settled into a permanent lower rate before any demand was made upon you for reduction. Out of all the creditors of all the persons I act for you are the only person that has as yet said anything on the subject.. I trust therefore you will allow matters to remain undisturbed until we see what turn things take. Should 20 shilling notes be issued in England you will have interest lower than ever it has been yet ...'

10 February 1837

Summary of terms in a mining lease on the Gosford estate, the scale of the undertaking envisaged was very small, the stipulated labour force being a mere six men.

'A lease for 31 years at a tribute of one-tenth marketable ore to be weighed off and delivered at mine or sold with company's ore and proceeds accounted for. High [?] of any unoccupied water or water courses necessary for the washing of ore and working mine. Liberty to erect and remove any building or machinery necessary for working of mine an making roads or water courses necessary on paying surface damages to party entitled. The company covenanting to keep six men constantly employed; failing to do so for 6 month to forfeit lease. A letter only required that a lease will be granted as above until the mine is proved, say first year.'

'Original sent Mr Dobbin 18th.'

7 March 1837

Letter To Thomas Cain, Bangor discussing terms for a mining lease.

'I am favoured with yours of the 21st and cannot admit that I am in any way to blame in my correspondence with you. I have stated that I was satisfied with the terms proposed but I am not satisfied to pledge myself to grant a lease under the vague term of the usual clauses which might lead to litigation and dissatisfaction if the property turned out to be worth quarrelling about.'

'The memorandums you sent are not drawn up in any formal way so as to be referred to nor are they if I recollect right, even signed. I am not authorized under such circumstances to give any such promise nor if I was, am I at all disposed to do so.'

'I charge no fee on leases and if you have a mind to enter into a lease I think it would be fair to allow you after expending a certian sum in the search to serve notice of surrender and abandon the enterprize. In this way we would understand each other but I would rather run the risk of losing a tenant than being involved in a misunderstanding.'

23 March 1837

Letter To William Harper, 20 George Place, Dublin concerning a lease in the townland of Drumlarney on Lord Gosford's estate in Co. Cavan.

'I really am heartily sick of Drumlarney which has been a thorn in my side for years, and I was in hope that I had done with it.'

'Mr Robinson was here and a lease was filled for him but Mr Dobbin having mislaid the power of attorney my brother who was one of Lord Gosford's trustees would not execute it until the power was found which it has not been yet, and I suppose now we shall have to send out another to Canada.'

'We have acknowledged him as tenant and entitled to a lease and this has been done under the authority of the sale from you and if Lord Gosford had been here I should have had no scruple to give him the lease when you had given him possession nor do I think Lord Gosford or those acting for him can with propriety interfere between you now. I would recommend you leaving the matter to two friends and I should give my advice to Mr Robinson to do so.'

31 March 1837

Letter To L[eonard] Dobbin Junior Esq, Gardner's Place, Dublin exhorting him to take care of Lord Gosford's interests in the negotiation with Mr Casebourne engineer for the Ulster canal who requires more land for the completion of their work.

'I have received the within from Mr Casebourne engineer for the Ulster Canal requiring to carry away more of Lord Gosford's land for the completion of their works. Upon the last demand I send you the act of parliament he sent me to show the powers he possesses which, by the way, he now wishes to be returned. The management of the whole business of this transfer of land was, during Lord Gosford's presence here, confided to you and I am really not qualified to say how far Mr Casebourne's rights extend. I therefore beg you may take care of his Lordship's interests now as in the previous stages of the business.'

'His Lordship would not, I think, wish to impede a public work but I would think it advisable that our arrangement ought to be committed to writing so as [to] ensure an equitable remuneration for the injury about to be done him which can't be known until the work is finished. I must therefore leave this in your hands and am most truly ...'

PS 'I conclude your arrangement with Thompson is finally settled or you would have told me.'

12 April 1837

Letter To [ ] Martin Esq, Farnborough Bagshot, Hampshire concerning payment for draining tools and railway equipment supplied for transporting clay for reclamation work and improvements on the Dungannon Schoolands estate. Transport facilities between England and Ireland were not always satisfactory and agricultural products and seeds were liable to deteriorate on the journey. Goods sometimes went astray and Blacker always provided against this by insisting on insurance by the supplier.

'I really feel most exceedingly annoyed and chagrind that I should unavoidably appear to you so remiss in not sending you payment of the draining tools and railway articles which are so long due and which you kindly took so much trouble about. The great delay in sending them forward prevented my getting them by the spring conveyance and they have lain over in Belfast and elsewhere until I find it difficult to trace anything about them so as to clear up the matter to enable me to pass my accounts with the Commissioners [of Education].'

'When I wrote to you last I was under the impression on that the account you sent me annexed to your letter dated 5 December 1836 amounting to £59 13s. 6d. was all for goods by the same conveyance and concluded that the 10 sets of draining tools were sent with the wagon to the scene of operations and were a second lot when visiting them I found more had been received by that conveyance [ ] after losing much time in writing back and forward to brokers lightermen and storekeepers to try and make out what had become of them, I begin to think from perusing your letter that the draining tools charged with the wagon were those formerly sent long since which I thought had been settled for at the time but I can't find any entry of the payment and therefore am led now to imagine that no second parcel has been sent ...'

He has a report that 5 different assortments of draining tools making in all 6 dozen pieces were received but their accounts says 10 sets so that there is disagreement on this point. He apologises and asks if there was any more than one shipment of draining tools and if so how many pieces each set consists of and whether any at all were sent with the wagon.'

'... I shall pay your commission with pleasure and only regret it has been so dearly earned ... I only got the wagons at work about 10 days ago and they were doing their business well when some of the ignorant savages in the neighbourhood maliciously broke one of the wheels and one of the rollers of the turn table so that I have but little to compensate me for all the trouble I have had in endeavouring to benefit them. You may direct under cover to Viscount Acheson MP Brooke's London.'

17 April 1837

Letter To Thomas Casebourne, Caledon engineer on the Ulster Canal concerning further lands required for works on the canal. Land was usually sold at 25 years purchase of its rental value but in this transaction with the Ulster Canal Company and indeed also in the purchase of the Graham estate by Lord Gosford this had not been the case. The existence of perpetuity leases always raised purchase prices as septennial fines, renewal fines and fines on the fall of lives were additional factors to be taken account of in a valuation.

Reference is made in this Letter To the boiler which was installed at Gosford Castle as part of a central heating system at a cost of over £500.

'I don't like anything that might appear likely to obstruct a public work. Lord Gosford himself paid above 27 years purchase upon a rental he had to reduce and I consider the jury wholly astray in stating 22 years. If you pay the 27 years I am willing on the part of Lord Gosford to abide by it.'

'Will you tell your brother that I have been in daily expectation of hearing from him on this annoying business of the boiler. He will never get anything but annoyance by dealing with such people. It would be much better to get what was done out of the man's hands and get it finished elsewhere ...'

26 April 1837

Letter To George Carr Esq, [Mountjoy Square, Dublin], in response to his demand for an increase in the rate of interest on the mortgage he held on the Gosford estate, or failing that requiring an immediate repayment of loan. With money in short supply Blacker was forced to submit to the demand. The market for loans had enlarged considerably with the advent of joint stock banking and for this reason Blacker hoped that he could avoid similar demands from others, a situation that had not existed 20 years earlier than those holding incumbrances on the estate were a closely knit social group receiving identical rates of interest.

'I intended to have mentioned to you when I met you at my brother's that in the present state of things getting anyone to take an assignment of your security was quite impracticable and therefore that I must submit to your demand of 5 per cent which shall be paid accordingly.'

'I beg however you may not make mention of it as it might bring more demands on me of the same kind. I shall do what I can to comply with your further wishes when the storm blows over ...'

28 April 1837

Letter To John McArthur, Audlestown, Armagh concerning his long standing dispute over payment for survey work on the Dungannon Schoolands estate.

'I have received your letters of the 7th inst which annexed balance £192 8s. 0d. As I understand the Board [ ] have consented to a reference in Armagh, I should wish to know within what limits of time your arbitrator would find it most convenient to attend and as far as I can I shall be happy to conform to his wishes.'

'As you formerly requested to know whether I should prefer documentary evidence in support of such written statement as each might make I beg to express myself favourable to a written statement and as you are the complainant if you will furnish me with what you propose laying before the referees I shall return you my answer there to for you to comment on and anything you further add to be liable to my remarking on. This would be much more satisfactory to the referees and by condensing the matter would I hope enable them to settle the matter in one day's time.'

'I appointed Mr Scott considering from his connection with Sir A. Chichester he would be the person most acceptable to you. I should wish to have some person coversant with land agency as umpire. There is a Mr Barrons [?] here agent to Mr Wilson of Dublin but I am not sure whether he would undertake it or be able to settle it at the time appointed. I think it is as well we should agree as to the umpire and everything else that would narrow the question for the referees. If we can't agree then it must be left to the referees to name us whoever it is right to be present from the first ...'

10 May 1837

Letter To Albines Martin Esq, [Farnborough, Bagshot, Hampshire] concerning settlement of account for the supply of draining tools and railway equipment for land reclamation work on the Dungannon Schoolands estate at Stewartstown [see No. 131].

'I have at length got all matters cleared up and regret the trouble and delay that has taken place in the settlement of your demand.'

14 May [1837]

Letter To Leonard Dobbin Junior Esq, [solicitor] 23 Gardiners Place, Dublin discussing the affairs of Mr Prittie who held a mortgage for £8,730 15s. 4d. on the Gosford estate at 5 per cent, a rate which she managed to sustain when others were willing to accept a rate of interest of 4½ per cent. Reference is made to his discussion of the matter with Blacker's brother Maxwell who lives in Dublin.

'Dear Dobbin, I have searched my box in which all law papers and securities are placed and I am quite certain I have not any papers of that description which is not there. The papers belonging to Lord Belmore you enquire for never came to me and must be in your office. I send you all the documents I have connected with Lord Dunally and Mr Prittie as per annexed list.'

'You must contrive to manage the assignment of the Gosford security. It is payable with 5 per cent interest. Maxwell [Blacker] spoke of having money to pay off different securities. Apart from this sum to be invested, could not the amount to be made up by letting those debts remain until future savings enabled you to pay them off and appropriate the sum wanted for this security. It is peculiarly desirable as regards Lord G[osford] because it is not attended with expense and will not be called in so you must manage it somehow or other and let me [know] when the money will be forthcoming in case you can arrange it that I may have my arrangements made for the disposal and try to satisfy Stewart that I may get my balance of interest.'

'I send you the charge on the Gosford property and think the lease of Mr Baines [?] house may remain until he gets the perpetuity. He conditions to give me the perpetuity which in fact he can't do until he attains it. I am not liable to any charge thereupon, the £150 covering everything. You have the documents belonging to my present house from St. George which will I hope soon be wanted as I am anxious to part with it.'

'I don't exactly understand the form you speak of by which I can get my title clear of all judgements affecting Mr Baines [Barnes?] but I would certainly think it very desirable that this should be the case. I thought a lease at an annual rent was free from all connection with his affairs farther than that his creditors might appoint a receiver but you can take all opportunity when you meet Maxwell upon Mr Prittie's affairs to ask him what is best.'

PS 'It is probable the papers you look for in regard to Lord Belmore may be mixed in the papers belonging to the late Col. Acheson in Lord Gosford as his executor. I see by refering to your letter of 6th June 1834 that you had to send the assignment to L[ord] G[osford] for signature ...'

List of documents forwarded to Leonard Dobbin Jnr Esq:

Charge on the Gosford estate of £1,000 favour of William Blacker Esq. Thomas Hackett Esq executor of William Hackett deceased and Henry Sadlier Lord Baron Dunally.

Assignment of judgement for £4,000 to William Blacker Esq dated 17th April 1834 in which is an old bond of Lord Dunally's and Monr F. A. Prittie to Mrs Hackett also a receipt from Gerson [?] for cost paid him.

'Caroline Winsor widow assignment to William Blacker Esq dated 11th day of April 1835 for £425 11s. 0d. and old bonds of Caroline Winsor widow and executor of Charles Winsor to William Blacker Esq enclosed.

Honble F. A. Prattie and Hon. J [?] Prattie Bond to William Blacker dated 6 April 1830 for £1,100, paid off

Honble F. A. Prattie and Hon. J. Prattie Esq bond to William Blacker Esq dated 14 December 1829 for £3,000, paid off

Honble F. A. Prattie and Hon. J. Prattie Esq bond to William Blacker Esq dated 1 May 1830 for £4,900, paid off

'These documents were sent by me to Leonard Dobbin Jnr Esq, 23 Gardiner Place, Dublin by the mail of Monday night 15th May 1837.'

15 May 1837.

Letter To A F St. George Esq, Tyrone House, Oranmore, Co. Galway for repayment of a loan because of delay in payment of interest. Blacker invaribly managed to obtain a rate of interest half a per cent or one per cent higher than was usual. When his brother advanced money to the Gosford family he obtained a similar rate of interest for them.

'I have never had the pleasure of receiving anything in answer to the letter I last wrote at the instance of my brother and of course conclude you do not agree to the terms therein stated. When I accepted the assignment of the security on your estate I was assured it would be punctually attended to on your part and finding that not to be the case I must beg you will consider this as notice to repay the principal on next gale day and I trust the interest now due at 6 per cent will be immediately remitted to me ...'

2 June 1837

Letter To A.F. St. George Esq, Tyrone House, Oranmore, Co. Galway concerning delay in payment of interest on a loan. Blacker was a major source of loan funds for the Gosford family. He held £10,000 of their incumbrance until 1839 when he began to withdraw his money from Ireland for investment in English securities on which the returns were lower than those available in Ireland.

'I have delayed replying to yours of the 5th having been much hurried with business. The Letter To which alluded as having written to you in reply to my brother's application which you mention was to this effect: that I would make no objection to the delay you required provided the interest was paid up to whatever gale day you thought most convenient to yourself and then paid regularly in half yearly from that.'

'I can get 5 per cent paid at a bank the day it is due on Northern security and these to cover an accidental circumstance. You may be allowed 4 months before a charge [?] of 6 per cent can be made. I can by no means recognise this as an admission that I am to remain unpaid until then.'

'I would wish to have this distinctly understood with you and it is very important to me at present for at this season a half year becomes due again. I am always pressed for advances to my employers where rents are not recoverable until November. I trust you will see the reasonableness of what I state. Please yourself as to the gale day but let the interest be paid to that time and regularly to the day afterwards ...'

[June-July 1837]

Letter To John Barnes Esq, Co. Longford concerning problems with the sewers of a house in Armagh which Blacker is buying from Col. Napier. Reference is made to the architect Quin.

'When I wrote to you last I alluded to the sewer of the adjoining houses on the authority of Col. Napier but I was not aware of the exact state of things until yesterday when I saw a plan from Quin the architect by which it appears that the sewers running in front of the house were never intended for anything but to convey the water from the foundations and are totally unfit from their construction and erection being at right angles for to answer water closets which must always choke up the passage and be annoyance to me. It is so unusual a thing for the sewers of one house to come into another that I never thought of enquiring. The smell I complained of under the steps I thought arose from the gas pipe which is there. Quin informs me that the sewer in front is of a dead level all along the front and that there is another main sewer which if the passage through me was stopped up would turn the vent the other way.'

'On mentioning this to Mr Dobbin he thought it best that I should immediately write to you on the subject before matters went further. I think you will agree with me that within the limits of my lease the land ought to be my own and that it would be quite unreasonable to have the measurement of another house to come within my walls.'

'Mrs Barnes was anxious to defer her auction until after the election and I most readily assented to her request. May I beg of you to give me an answer upon the foregoing by return of post for I should wish to have everything cleared up before taking possession ...'

PS 'As there is no authority reserved for entering on my premises in the way Col. Napier has been lately obliged to do I conclude that sufficient in itself to decide the matter but I don't think you can have any objection to what I state and I think it better to have it cleared up now than have it to be a matter of dispute perhaps hereafter.'

28 July 1837.

Letter To P. Dixon Hardy Esq, Printing Office, 3 Caultra [?] Street Crown Street, Dublin discussing Blacker's various pamphlet publications.

'On my return here [Markethill] a few days ago I perused your letter of 21st and a parcel of the Prize Essay and Landlord's Edition, with a letter from Mr Groombridge and an account of his proceedings which are anything but encouraging. He seems to have fallen into some error as to the price of the Claims of the Landed Interest which he sets down at 9d. whereas it is marked I think 6s. 6d. Will you mention this when you write.'

'It appears that the Agricultural Essays are in demand and all I had at another booksellers to whom I referred him for a supply had been disposed of so that I hoped you have forwarded him by steamer the number allotted to him in my statement and also to Mr Ridgeway [seedsman London]. If they would be good enough to send half a dozen to each of their country correspondents on the terms of taking them back if they did not sell I am of opinion it [would be] far more beneficial than advertising - particularly watering places where there is a great change of company and people are at a loss for amusement. Will you remember this to Mr Groombridge and beg his attention to it and also Messrs Curry & Co.'

'28 July I had written the foregoing some time ago expecting a private conveyance. Since then I received your account and today your application for payment. I am always very bare of money at this time of the year before the rents come in as my employers c[laim] [?] upon me during the summer but I expect the payment of some interest money due me which I have written for and hope in a few days to be able to give you at least a part.'

'In the meantime I want to mention that in your estimate for the Prize Essay the charge per sheet was £1 16s. 0d. which you charge it £2 5s. 0d. and cheap edition which in estimate is 44s. 0d. is charged 50s. 0d.'

'I would likewise beg to point out to you that you charge the paper height in place of lower [?] and the quality not so good. I could buy this minute paper at 18s. 0d. stronger thicker and as well coloured at 18s. 0d. as you have put into the Landlord's Edition and the paper in the cheap edition is really in the same proportion not worth more than 15s. 0d.'

'I think you will on examination be sensible there must be some mistake made and I would be glad to hear from you in the interim. You told me the lowering of the duty would make a difference of about 2s. 0d. The paper in the cheap edition is very poor.'

'I should be very sorry to have any difference of opinion with you and beg you may candidly take the foregoing into your consideration. As the election for the County is over I shall have business that will take me to Dublin and I will call on you but I should be gald to hear in the meantime that you agree to the remarks I have made and say what shipment you have made for England as they [?] are [?] called for there and the benefit of the advertising is lost where they are not ready for delivery. I hope therefore to hear that they are gone though you have neglected to mention it.'

'I have another publication partly prepared but there is so much trouble and so little profit by publishing that I [have] little intention to finish it ...'

8 July 1837

Letter To William Peebles Esq, 17 North Frederick Street, Dublin concerning 2 farms held in Peebles family under a lease for lives two of whom are stated to be alive in America [see Nos. 112 and 113]. Here again reference is made to the middleman's profit rent which the landlord acquired on expiry of a lease.

'We have on the part of Lord Gosford been for several years applying to you to surrender all possession of the two farms your family hold under his Lordship for the lives of Denniston and Peebles whom you have always stated to be alive in America. I refer you now to the annexed letter and request your answer in course whether you persist in refusing to give up the possession and whether you consider that you are not bound to account for the profit rent which you have been receiving now for so many years. I beg you may write explicitly and without delay ...'

PS 'If not as directed to be forwarded.'

Extract from Mr James Stewart's Letter To William Blacker Esq dated Markethill 29 July 1837.

'Dear Sir in the summer of 1835 I received a memorandum from Mr Hans Peebles of Omagh requesting me to endeavour to find out a certain Hans Peebles in the United States, supposed to be in a powder mill near New York. I was referred to John Peebles a brother near Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania and also to Alexander Denniston and Hans Denniston of New York for any information.'

'On landing in New York in November 1835 I could not find the Messrs Dennistons and their names were not in the New York Directory. After I arrived at Pittsborough I learned from William Peebles that his father John Peebles was dead and that the last time they heard from his uncle Hans Peebles the life in question was about 1810 at which time he lived at the Brandy Wine Powder Mills in Delaware State and that he considered his said uncle was long since dead.' 28 July 1837

Letter To Messrs Trotter & Co, Edinburgh concerning charges for furnishing Blacker's house in Armagh. Blacker was sufficiently influential to determine the success or failure of a firm trying to break into the Irish market. Hence the veiled threat that if the most favourable terms were not forthcoming Mr Trotter need not look for business in Ireland. Blacker's almost excessive attention to detail is revealed in his preoccupation with his house furnishing.

'Gentlemen I have had a foreman of yours looking at my house in Armagh but I have not had any opportunity of considering your estimate nor can any judgement be formed as the quality of the articles so materially affects the price.'

'Therefore as I see that you are extending your business in this country and thinking you must be sensible that overcharging me would be an injury to your own prospects in this country I have taken my friend Mr Close's advice and have determined to leave the prices to yourselves.'

'Dining parlour damask woven curtains hung upon a gilt pole with large brass rings or in the way you propose with a cornice which ever is cheapest. The new London furniture at Gosford castle from the Queen's [?] upholsters as hung on a pole as above but I think yours will look very well also. I would like the pole but as I dislike drapery [ ] a turkey carpet for same. A picture rod: I have one in my present house which I think might answer but if the cost was very trifling it would not be worth removing. It will only be wanted at one side of the room I think.'

'Drawing room: 3 curtains of drab damask [ ] I would not by any means like the heavy drapery as your drawing which is only a receptacle for dust: something quite simple: and I have to remark to you that my [ ]ar tables with [ nors] on them are wider than the space between the architraves and would come forward to within an inch of the extra space including architrave but as there are 3 windows and the room not large I think the drapery might so far encroach upon the windows that the defect might be covered but in this respect I would wish your opinion.'

[Paper with drab ground something like the pattern around with gilt flower [?] pattern to suit pattern on the damask appears to me likely to look well and gilt border] 10 chairs as you describe would be as many as the room would hold. 2 easy [?] chairs (you don't say kind or price) a low book case under large glass opposite fireplace: a carpet such as you mention.'

'Bedroom over drawing room: a bed complete including everything requisite of best quality but nothing out of character: chintz I like best: 2 bedside stands at 25s. 0d. wash table linen and dressing table: a large glass for a lady's use on a stand: wash hand stand etc for dressing room. The paper you are to choose to suit the curtains and bed hangings. The new beds at Gosford Castle both double and single are all suspended from the ceiling and no posts to the bed: this bedroom is low and I think this would answer better and be cheaper and your man could easy see them at Gosford by using my name.'

'All the rooms are exposed to the sun and will require fast colours and linings all to be not liable to fade which you must allow to dressing room off bedroom with curtains to match bedroom.'

'Bedroom over drawing room I mean for myself and would wish a plain four post bed with a plain cornice and the drapery suitable and not likely to collect dust. Two window curtains and paper to match.'

'I think it may be necessary for your man to cover over again. If so I would wish him to write to my brother Rev Dr Blacker, Mullabrack Markethill who would meet him as I shall not be at home and would be able to give any instructions necessary.'

'The front partition will require Venetian blinds outside to pull from within if you can ensure them not going out of order.'

'You may judge from my being content with damask moreen curtains the general style of the other furniture. I would wish the bedsteads 6 feet wide by 6½ feet long.'

'I scarcely recollect anything else to say further than that I think the kind of drapery you give in your drawing for the parlour windows would do very well for the drawing rooms to cover over the pole and leave only the gilt ends to be seen. The drapery going straight along would not hide the mirrors by hanging down at the side and the curtains would cover the cutting away of the architraves to make room for the pier [?] table and glass.'

'Considerable care will be required to proportion the length of the poles just to cover what is necessary and no more.'

'Bedding is so bulky that I sincerely think you can furnish it as cheap as it can be got here and I would not wish to pay any higher price so that you can judge whether to send it or not. I have not fixed whether I shall put up my old furniture or not in the other best rooms. Much will depend on your charges. Until I determine this I can't fix on papers. If you have any carpet curtain or other articles at Lurgan you wish to refer to explain what you intend my brother is occasionally there and could see them but it would be more convenient as they would be remnants if they were sent to him to Armagh where he frequently goes to. I am anxious to have this order executed forthwith. Mr Hays is painting the house and he can tell you when it will be ready and let him know I wish it hurried up as fast as the rooms are ready and all the upper part is ready now ...'

29 August 1837

Letter from John Mitchell to Hans Peebles Esq, Omagh concerning the lives mentioned in a lease for lives of 2 farms held by the Peebles family on the Gosford estate.

'Before Mr Blacker left this for England he handed me your letter of 12th ulto by which it appears Hans Denniston is dead but you are silent as to Hans Peebles of whom there has been no account these many years though he is a life in several of your leases. I conclude he is long since dead and shall consider your leases expired till I receive proof from you of his existance.'

'Mr James Stuart the American agent will be at Davis's Hotel Newry on the 15th and 16th inst and if you wish to make enquiry you will have an opportunity of doing so by him ...'

10 September 1837

Letter from William Blacker at Drumfries to John Barnes Esq [Armagh] concerning a house in Armagh that Blacker was buying from Colonel Napier.

'I hope this will find you in Armagh as I really feel I have cause to complain if matters still remain as my last accounts mention. You may recollect that I told you from the first my object was to warm the pantry as well as the hall for my plate has been injured heretofore by both damp and smoke. I mentioned this and the flue was pointed out before I left home and I had your word of honor as a gentleman that I might leave home with a perfect certainty that nothing should interrupt my getting possession and yet I now hear that nothing has been done and that the stove remains where I left it. I put the matter upon this honourable footing because I think it stronger than stamp or contract but I can't on the other hand see that a contract can bind one party without binding another and I have only promised to pay rent from 1 of August on the terms of being put in possession of what was agreed on.'

'I have many a time repented my having had anything to say to the house but I should regret it beyond all comparison more if it should lead me into any misunderstanding with you or Colonel Napier whom I should regret most exceedingly to annoy and had I anticipated that he would have been annoyed I certainly would have had nothing to say to it on any terms. I expect company and am obliged to beg your immediate compliance with your engagement ...'

2 October 1837

Letter To John Barnes Esq, Armagh concerning difficulties over work at the house which he is purchasing in Armagh.

'In answer to yours of the 12th the funnel was identified and acknowledged by both you and Colonel Napier before I left Armagh and the boiler was to have been altered by you on the Monday following. Your word of honour was passed to me and I call on you to the fulfilment of it. Had it been possible to have made any other funnel answer I would have made any objection.'

'I regret most extremely annoying Colonel Napier and would not have bought the house had I foreseen it but it was with you I made the bargain and it is your word of honour is pledged to me and it is to you I must apply. There can be no use in my going with you to Colonel Napier. I have before explained everything previous to your promise and his consent and what can I now do more. I beg of you just to think the way you are treating me in this matter ...'

PS 'I am so much in arrear here I can't leave this.' Wm B.

13 October 1837

Letter To Leonard Dobbin Jnr, [solicitor Dublin asking him to have judgement entered on two bonds.

'My dear Dobbin, I send you two bonds to get judgement entered on, which I hear must be done previous to November so that there is no time to be lost. Make out for me separate accounts of the cost and shall pay them as they don't come into my account.' 13 October 1837

Letter To Messrs Trotter & Co, Upholsterers, Edinburgh concerning furnishing of Blacker's house in Armagh [see No. 142].

'I have been detained longer than I expected but on my return I have lost no time in comparing your drawings furniture etc. In regard to the drawing room the carpet has too much white for a bachelor's room but the damask moreen [?] seems to answer well enough. The paper however is not at all the thing I wished for. It was a gilt pattern to match the pattern on the moreen, something like a pattern that was shown me by the painter. The drapery of the curtains I would have made like the drawing annexed. The muslin curtain I think would fill up the bareness which the want of drapery under the gold rod occasions. If you think it not sufficient the blind may be made to draw up under the rod close to the "safith" [?] in place of lying close to the window: the tassels to be arranged so as to form a kind of drapery and for that purpose the curtain ought to pull by a cord so as to regulate their distances. The tassel and binding and blinds ought to be a gold colour. The crimson looks heavy and would not suit the paper.'

'I don't think much of any of the calicoes for the bedrooms. The pattern for best bedroom is very dead looking. I have a friend Mr Younghusband No. 29 Irwin Leith Row in whose taste I have implicit reliance and to save further correspondence I think he will choose for me what you should adopt for all the bedrooms. All I want is to have what is neat and clean and will not fade. The lining calico seems well adopted for the purpose.'

'The architrave of the windows will have to come away entirely to admit the pier glasses and tables but the [ ] windows being very much spla[ ]ed I think the curtains at each side will not exclude much light. I shall be glad to hear I have made myself understood and am sorry I had not the benefit of seeing Mr Potts but perhaps he may have to visit this again ...'

PS 'Show the annexed Letter To Mr Younghusband and I think he will act for me for I can't judge of articles of furniture by a small pattern and I hope it will be an inducement to him to see them put up. Wm Blacker.'

PS 'I think I ordered venetian blinds for the front parlour. I would prefer them outside if they can be made so as not to give me trouble hereafter and be a permanent thing.'

16 October 1837

Letter from William Blacker, Markethill to his brother Maxwell Blacker Esq, Dublin concerning transference of a mortgage on the Gosford property to his brother Dr Samuel Blacker rector of Mullabrack. Reference is made to Lord Gosford who as governor of lower Canada had faced war and rebellion; it is thought that he has 'tired of Canada and has applied for liberty to return'.

'My dear Maxwell, I send you a letter of credit in favour of Ball & Co for £741 3s. 3d. which according to annexed statement will pay you the remainder of Lord Gosford's bond which Sam has taken from you. Had you not better write to him a letter declaring the property to be now vested in him or settle it in what way you may think best.'

'I imagine Lord G[osford] is tired of Canada and has applied for liberty to return. He is said to be a good deal changed in appearance etc by the anxiety of his situation.'

'You will be sorry to hear Lord Caledon has had a fit of apoplexy - a copious bleeding at the nose, an effect of nature relieved him and he soon recovered himself and is now well again. You need not speak of it yours affectionately.'

1 December 1837

Letter To John Barnes Esq, Stipendary Magistrate, Longford concerning difficulties with the sewers at the house in Armagh purchased by Blacker. Reference is made also to a difficulty over title.

'Time is passing over and I would be glad you would write to Mr Dobbin [solicitor Dublin] to get your title laid before my brother for his approval. I have got myself into so much trouble with Mr St. George by not having his title regularly [?] examined that it will be a warning to me the rest of my life.'

'I am rather at a loss to find out the season [?] you spoke of bringing in the garden and I should be glad you would mention whether there is a sewer from the scullery to the kitchen towards the front, also where the sewer that receives the rain water at the corner of the coach house is conveyed to. I have regretted my bargain ever since I made it ...'

PS 'I have never been told the price of the hall lamp.'

7 December 1837

Letter To Hans Peebles Esq resolving the dispute with the Peebles family over a lease for lives of 2 farms on the Gosford estate where it was thought that the lives were dead (see Nos. 112 and 113]. As usual in such cases where there was little intention or expectation of a renewal of the lease, outbuildings and cabins were allowed to deteriorate. Under-tenants were not permitted to remain in possession if they owed arrears to the previous lessee but in most cases Blacker paid these debts which were cancelled by work done on improvements. This made the sub-tenants tenants at will and thereby created a direct landlord-tenant relationship.

'I have been some time absent but now find your Letter To Mr Mitchell of the 24th ultimo. There is half a year of the rise rent since May which I think should now be paid and there is also the lease of which Jemison is the last life according to your representation but he is not the person mentioned in the lease as appears by his being a third son and not a second as the lease states. The report to me is that there has been a substitution of him as the life and that in fact the life died before he was born. I can easily prove to you that this is not the second son of anyone and I must call on you to give up possession if you can't produce the person described as the life.'

'In regard to the other two leases which remain I would have no objection to allow you for them according to Richmond's valuation the same as we charge you.'

'I really feel much dissatisfied in this transaction and I see that the buildings of your remaining leases are in a complete state of delapadation. I beg you would say whether you mean to give up Jemison or not and I must also beg to have possession from your under-tenants for I will not keep people with arrears hanging over them that must keep them paupers. Requesting an immediate answer ...'

7 December 1837

Letter To C. Fitzgerald, solicitor 4 Grattan Street, Dublin concerning mortgages held by Blacker against a Mr Woodward.

'I send you annexed the account of arrears due me by Mr Woodward which however you might have from the Master's office. I should much rather that the £1,000 charge was made use of and the money raised which would soon make you clear of the concern and when it is reported by the Master on a correct security I hope you will be able to get it assigned and have my account closed.'

'On showing this Mr Armstrong will give you any assistance in his power to carry into effect any plan that my brother approves of, you being at the expense of it and I should be glad how soon the business was finally settled ...'

PS 'Mr Shane I dare say has a copy of the settlement in Chancery or it may be had in the Master's office.

'There will be, I suppose, a further payment of about £300 received from Mr Falkener shortly. I find I can't state the exact balance now due me as I have not a copy of the decrease in Chancery which recite the settlement then made which included some costs. I was paid up to January 1829 before Mr Falkener's appointment since which I have only received the above. Mr Shane or Mr Armstrong can show you the decree or you can get it in the Master's office. I fancy the £1,000 charge and the arrears will just about cover my demand. When you have seen Mr Armstrong I shall be happy to concur in what he may recommend ...'

21 December 1837

Letter To A. St. George, Woodpark, Tynan, Co. Armagh concerning the lease of the house in Armagh which Blacker hoped to acquire. St. George had given Blacker a lease which gave better title than St. George himself held.

'My dear St. George, I have been waiting in expectation of hearing from you what arrangements you had made with Mr Leckey. I now find from Mr Stanley that Mr L[ecky] has been in Armagh and has declared positively that he will not renew either yours or his [lease] and under these circumstances I wish you to state what you think it reasonable to propose. The whole thing is one mass of error and in which each of us have acted very foolishly. I now only hope that we may get this matter settled without dispute or difference which I would most anxiously wish to keep clear of. We have both got bad titles and have both laid out largely on them. You have given me a bond of indemnity for £200 I think and have given me a lease for a term longer than your own. I don't want to take any advantage of your oversight nor do I think you would wish to take any advantage of me but I would wish to get the matter settled and not be left as I am. Will you consider the matter and let me know what you consider fair and right between us and let me hear from you with as little delay as possible ...'

21 December 1837

Letter To Rev Francis Gervias Cecil, Aughnacloy pointing out that it is not worth the trouble for Blacker acting as intermediary in buying seeds from London for Gervias's use.

'Dear Gervias I thought you were wrong as to the payment of the above. I don't see that it is the least use to you my keeping these accounts. Every trifle has to go through day book and ledger as if it was thousands. I should do it with pleasure if it was in any use to you but it is not. You will just get the things from Wrench as cheap as I can. I have advanced this in the meantime yours truly.'

22 December 1837

Letter from John Mitchell Jnr to Dr Lynn sending subscriptions for the County Armagh Temperance Association. Support of temperance movement was in some sense the effect of the Protestant Evangelical 'moral agency' approached to estate management as seen on the Duke of Manchester's estate at Tandragee and Portadown, Powerscourt Estate Benburb and Roden estate Bryansford. It is important to note that Blacker never at any time acted as 'moral agent' for the Gosford family.

'By Mr Blacker's desire I send you copy of subscriptions payable by the following to the County Armagh Temperance Association: Earl Gosford's subscription £3 3s. 0d. Lord Achesons £1 1s. 0d. William Blacker Esq 3 guineas Rev Dr Blacker £2 Colonel Close 3 guineas Mr Close 1 guinea.'

26 December 1837.

Letter To Messrs Wrench & Sons [seedsmen] London Bridge, London sending a bill for £1,112 7s. 2d. on Messrs Spooner Atwood & Co being the amount of their account for clover seed shipped to Blacker in February 1837. He places an order for Rev Francis Gervias of Aughnacloy for 1 bag of red clover seed and 42 lbs. of turnip seed White Globe 14 lbs. Yellow Aberdeen 7 lbs. Dales Hybred 14 lbs Swedish 7 lbs.

1 January 1838

Letter To Samuel Robb, Baleek concerning Mr Mann's surrender of possession of Baleek Park.

'I have received your note stating Mr Mann required a discharge from me before he would surrender possession of Baleek Park. I will give no man a discharge until he has delivered the trust up which was reposed in him. Judging from Mr Mann's conduct I might well expect he would keep the discharge if it served his purpose and the possession also.'

10 January 1838

Letter To Messrs Wrench & Sons, [seedsmen] London Bridge, London stating that although he did not sell their seeds at retail prices to tenants neither did he sell them at wholesale rates. Apparently he made some nominal charge for 'breaking bulk'.

'I am favoured with yours of the 6th inst under cover to Lord Acheson by the post of this day and am glad you have received the remittance safe. There are some bad looking pickles in the sample you enclose that appears shrivelled but the quality of the whole seems fair. I cannot account for it that when I find myself short and apply to the seed shops here I find I can get an equal quality at the same price mine stands me. I have a reliance upon your house and do not wish to trust the shops here for more than a few bags which may be wanting but I hope you will take care that I am put upon the lowest wholesale footing as it would be a pity to make the poor people I take so much trouble for to pay the retail price. I have given up all ordering for one of the estates I manage and therefore shall merely want the following quantities:

Marked G[osford] 90 cwt best red clover seed

1 bushel of the Pomeraniam [?]

Turnip seed you recommend

Marked P[irie] 12 cwt of best red clover

Marked Close 50 cwt of best red clover

The above to be shipped by steamer to Belfast and addressed to Mr J Mitchell Markethill to the care of the agents and a letter for Mr Mitchell to be put in the ship's letter bag to give notice of her arrival.

Marked F[yfe] 25 cwt best red clover to be shipped to care of the agents in Dublin addressed to Mr J Fyfe Arvagh and a Letter To him in the letter bag.'

I am glad to hear that your company have turned their attention to the cultivation of their [?] lands. You may depend it is ten times as useful as building houses. I shall write to your friend at Kilrea. Almost every landlord in Ireland is at present truly engaged in the same place or some modification of it suited to his circumstances. It is not too much to say that the agriculture of Ireland has improved more these last 5 years than it did for the 50 preceding and the improvement for the next 5 years will be, I think, even still greater.'

'As you must have an extensive acquaintance with English landlords you might perhaps have an opportunity of recommending similar exertions to them and unless they do so they may depend they will be undersold by the farmers of this country who according to their progress in green feeding are obtaining twice or three times the produce from their farms. ...'

Blacker refers to the tremendous improvement in Irish agriculture over the past five years.

12 January 1838

Letter To Mr Clark, seedsman, Drogheda placing an order for 40 barrels of sound good vetches delivered in Dundalk, with payment in ready money. He asked for a reply by return of post and notes 'as soon as this severe storm is over I will send a person with carts to receive them.'

20 January 1838

Letter To Messrs Dickson & Co, seedsmen, Edinburgh placing the usual order for seed.

'I am sorry to hear the high price of turnip seed particularly the Dales hybred which seems to me by much the best adapted for our use here.'

'I received your letter of the 4th inst only yesterday having been delayed by Lord Acheson and notwithstanding the enormous price I place that reliance upon your opinion that I beg to order the following quantities viz.

Marked Gosford White globe one bushel,

Yellow bullock three bushel,

Dales Hybred five bushel,

Swedish one bushel,

Yellow Aberdeen two bushels,

Dales Hybred one & ½ bushels,

Norfolk Red 1½ bushels,

White stone one bushel,

Swedish one bushel,

20 January 1838

Letter To George Clark, Drogheda placing an order for 40 barrels of vetches delivered at Markethill.

'I am favoured with yours of yesterday and will take the 40 barrels of vetches delivered here, 23s. 9d. of a quality such as sample but in dry condition delivered the first week in March or sooner if I call for them but as I am obliged to keep them in bags I can't receive them in their present condition, to be paid for in cash on delivery.'

'You will please to reply to this by return of post and say at what price you could deliver a cart load in Arvagh County of Cavan allowing you some time to pick up a return car.'

22 Jan. 1838

Letter from John Mitchell to Philip Costello solicitor, 44 Old Dominick Street, Dublin concerning lodgement of rent for a holding of Patrick Rice in the townland of Letrecullin [?] county Armagh.

'John Rice has just returned from Dublin where he has been for some time and states to me that Mr Patrick Boyd and Mr Rubian Hughes the former of No.13 the latter No.6 both Great Strand Street executors of the late Patrick Rice had lodged with you £33 5s. 0d. one year's rent due Lord Gosford at the death of Patrick Rice out of a holding in the townland of Letrecullin Co. Armagh. If the sum above stated is lodged with you will you have the goodness to lodge it with Messrs Ball & Co Henry Street to the credit of William Blacker Esq and send me the receipt and I will send you a receipt for the year's rent.'

1 February 1838

Letter To the Hon Mrs G Spencer concerning payment of interest on mortgages on Lord Bangor's estate. Statement of remittances to General Munro as per letter sent him under cover to Lord Churchill on 3 March 1838.

'This sum I wrote to the Northern Bank of Belfast to remit to Messrs Coutts & Co which will go by Monday's post less the stamp and postage they will be subject to. The cost of entering judgement of £2 3s. 0d. which I paid and charged to you I will receive from Lord Bangor so that all money accounts are completely closed ...'

3 March 1838

Letter To William Cotter Kyle, Secretary of the Board of Education concerning the establishment of a brick works for tenants on the Dungannon Schoolands estate at Stewartstown. The bricks were primarily intended for chimneys but no doubt Blacker hoped that an increase supply would lead to general building use.

'I forward you by the mail of this night a small dish made of the clay on the Schoolands sent me by Mr Ensor with the letter which accompanied it. I find it difficult to get the boring recommended in yours of the 12th ulto accomplished but I have got a sample of some that was thrown up several years ago when there was search making for coals found about 15 feet under the surface which I have no doubt is a fair sample of the quality. I imagine the stratum of this clay extends very generally throughout the entire neighbourhood beyond the limits of the Schoolands.'

'Mr Ensor don't seem to be very particular as to what part of the unoccupied bog he takes provided he could get a foundation to build on. I hope you will soon be able to let me know the opinion as to the toll gates about which the people are very anxious. The dish is made of the clay without being burned as you will perceive ...'

8 March 1838

Letter To Rev. Francis Gervais Cecil, Aughnacloy concerning the purchase of 'quicks' probably willow for hedging, reinforcement of the banks of drainage ditches and crop protection.

'Dear Gervais, I can't give more for the quicks laid down than 2s. 0d. per thousand but if you engage them really good I could free you, I dare say, of a large quantity, if it was an object to you if you would deliver them at Arvagh which is at no great distance from Enniskillen.'

'If you would like this write me in course that I may stop him from buying all he wants there. If he has not purchased I dare say he might require 2 or 3 hundred thousand.'

'You may send here 50,000 as a sample at the 2s. 0d. delivered if you choose. If not let me know immediately. I have got no invoice of my clover and am writing today to enquire.'

PS 'It is probable I may be able to take another 50,000 here but can't now state.'

9 March 1838

Letter To D. Auchinleck Esq, Omagh concerning one of Blacker's properties at Drumquin. Blacker paid 65 and obtained 197 pounds giving a profit rent of £130; relating this sum to values in previous years Blacker calculated the figure should have been £300 in 1838. Presumably the sale price of £6,000 was estimated on something like 25 years purchase of the rental.

'My land near Drumquin is not let at near its value notwithstanding which it has been so mismanaged by Mr Gallagher that it has been let go into arrears which however will be all paid up this next November.'

'The life is now I believe just 70 and I have no doubt it will be worth £500 a year. The leases now in existance are I think about [ ] and the actual rental now paying £197 out of which I pay head rent £12 4s. 6d. besides an allowance of £52 12s. 4d. to Major Stewart during the continuance of the lease so that I have very little out of it just now. There is however a considerable portion of it at will and if I was to take trouble of looking closely into it I am quite aware I could double what I now get. Under all the circumstances I would not take less than £6,000 for it...'

PS 'Some of the leases are in the attorney's hands and the annexed blank cannot be filled up at present. The tenants are getting an abatement of 20 per cent from the original letting.'

23 March 1838

Letter To William Ogle, Dungannon discussing terms for the engagement of a cook housekeeper. Although Blacker was seldom at home he maintained quite a large domestic establishment for a bachelor. Wages paid to servants were very low; a cook housekeeper for £30 per annum was by far the largest expense, serving maids earning less than £1 per month at Gosford Castle. Free foods, clothing and lodging were additional compensations.

'I have no objection to give the £30 a year to Mrs Purcell for acting as cook and housekeeper to commence from 1 May next and include all allowance or sooner if my present cook can previously find a place but I give her the usual month's notice yesterday. As to room for herself it is not in my power to give it as I told her, nor can any separate place be made except by drawing a curtain across a small recess in the kitchen. She will have no one there however to interfere with her except the female servants over whom she will have a control and she may have her own kitchen maid to bring with her. My only apprehension is that she may be likely not to agree with the men servants and I like peace and quietness most exceedingly.'

'I am so much from home that every man servant I can get is spoiled by having nothing to do. I am obliged to discharge at present my inside man servant for misconduct and want another very much that could be depended on as a steady confidential person. If he understood horses as well as indoor work it would be an accommodation. I would give fair wages if I could get a person that would answer me. Perhaps Mrs P[urcell] may know of such a one.'

2 April 1838

Letter To F. M. Thompson, Coal Factor, Carlisle placing an order for a trial cargo of coal delivered at Newry. Coal was imported from Whitehaven until 1840 when Wigan coal became much cheaper. It was usual for boats carrying coal into Newry to return with cargoes of grain or potatoes.

'I have received your letter of the 22nd ulto and will make trial of a cargo of your coal and should be pleased with your execution of the order. It will probably lead to your getting several more during the summer.'

'When I was staying with Lord Caledon some time since the coal seemed to be very small indeed which is a great fault and if it can't be guarded against will prevent its getting into general use here.'

'If you can get the freight lower I don't mind 10 or 15 tons difference in the size of the vessel. As summer is now arrived I should hope you would be able to get vessels cheaper than you state particularly as at this season there is generally plenty of grain shipping from Newry for Liverpool and Glasgow which may not be the case later in the season.'

'I should wish to have the cargo immediately if you think freight are as low as they will be.'

PS 'Have you any view of candle coal in your pits like what comes from Liverpool. If so I should wish to have 5 or 6 tons of it.'

5 April 1838

Letter To W D Griffith, solicitor, South Frederick Street, Dublin in reply to his application for an abatement of interest payments on a loan 'I am favoured with yours of the 5th. In reply I have referred to the deed and find that you have no claim of any kind for abatement when a year becomes due.'

'The deed is careful to state that each separate half year shall be entitled to the reduction whenever it can be paid within the given time. This right you would be able to avail yourself of within that time though you might not be able to keep up the same regularity afterwards but there is nothing in the deed whatever to support your claim to any abatement when the settlement is made annually and it would be contrary to commonsense to construe it in any other way as in that case you might delay payment of one half year for 10 months after it was due.'

'The inconvenience to me has been already very considerable and the annoyance of this correspondence still greater. I request therefore it may be brought to a close and either let me have the principal or the interest with a clear understanding that this question shall not be again mooted.'

7 April 1838

Letter To C. C. Boomer Esq, Session House, Markethill concerning payment of a debt.

'I have frequently applied both personally and by others for a settlement of Mr Cose's [?] account to which no attention has been paid. I have now again to say that Mr Mitchell will take your note for the balance due. If you have not the money to pay it and if this is not done I shall immediately adopt the most summary measures to force a settlement ...'

11 April 1838

Letter To Thomas Casebourne, Caledon, engineer to the Ulster Canal enclosing a report of Alexander Richmond on damage done to Lord Gosford's property by works upon the canal in the townland of Argonnell. 16 April 1838

N.B. the two last are taken the difference between their original and present value 30s. 0d. less 7s. 6d. = 22s. 6d. and 30s. 0d. less 1s. 6d. = 28s. 6d.

Letter To Thomas Casebourne, Caledon discussing terms for compensation for the purchase of Gosford property in the townland of Argonnell required for the Ulster Canal. Blacker states that the Graham estate was bought at 27 years purchase of the rental. The second earl of Gosford borrowed £67,000 (possibly £63,000 English) to pay for this Graham property which had only a nominal rent of over £2,000 which suggests a figure of 30 years purchase. In strict financial terms the acquisition of the Graham estate seems inexplicable because the interest payments due in the purchase money were £1,000 per annum more than the revenue derived from rent.

'I am quite ignorant of what took place at the time you state 20 years purchase to have been fixed on. The arrangements Lord Gosford's indemnity was placed under the direction of Mr Dobbin and I had no concern in it but this I can say from my own knowledge that if it was settled at 20 years purchase, most manifest injustice was done to Lord Gosford who has paid himself 27 years purchase for the Graham estate purchased but shortly before and upon a rental which he was obliged to reduce. I cannot therefore accept of any compensation being calculated under 25 years purchase which if you refer to Mr Prentice I am fully persuaded he will tell you is a lower calculation than ought [to] be made under the circumstances of property taken contrary to the wishes of the owner ...'

24 April 1838

Letter To W D Griffith, solicitor, South Frederick Street, Dublin discussing further the question of abatement of interests payments due to Blacker on a loan [see No. 168].

'The rent due by mortgage deed is at the rate of 6 per cent per annum with a clause that if the half year's interest was paid within 4 months of the time there should be a reduction upon said half year to 5 per cent but there is no reduction claimable when a year is due which is fixed at the rate of 6 per cent.'

'I have now been suffering considerable annoyance by corresponding on this business and have therefore to say now in few words if the interest is not paid on or before the 1 May I shall order proceedings to foreclose the mortgage.'

24 April 1838

Letter To C. Fitzgerald, solicitor, 4 Grattan Street [Dublin] concerning arrears of interest due to Blacker on a loan to a Mr Woodward [see No. 151].

'I feel very anxious to have this business of Woodward's annuity settled. I suppose there is a copy of the amount annexed to the original consent showing how the balance of £924 19s. 6d. arose for my books states it to have been at that time £962 5s. 6d. being 3 years annuity of £320 15s. 2d.'

'You have made a mistake in your calculation of the balance due now by considering the sum of £924 19s. 6d. as Irish currency whereas it is Brotish. If there are any particulars in the consent to show how this sum was made out I should be glad to see them.'

'I beg you may not bring forward any proceedings without the concurrence of Mr Armstrong and request you will let me know how the matter rests at present and how long Mr Falkener will continue without removal. ...'

30 April 1838.

# BLACKER, 1835– 49

Extracts from a copy out-letter book of William Blacker, showing the effects to The Great Famine.

William Blacker to William Cotter Kyle Esq., Clare Street, Dublin. Letter referring to conducting experiments according to the wishes of the Board of Commissioners, and petitions from tenants for help to put in crops.

'... you do not say anything in regard to petitions for assistance to put in crops which I fear will be pretty numerous for the wages for weaving are but very low at present.'

20 March 1846

William Blacker, Armagh to William Cotter Kyle Esq. [Clare Street, Dublin].

'I have had several applications both for assistance in seed and also provisions and I really am very much at a loss what to do or what advice to give but I think at all events it would be very desirable if you would apply to the relief committee and enquire whether they would furnish the Indian corn meal at cost price and what that price would be. I have used the Indian meal in stirabout myself for breakfast and think it perfectly good and palatable.

'It does not do at so late a season as this to be obliged to refer applications to you and I shall thank you to bring it before the Board whether it would not be better to permit me to act on such information as may come before me to some extent, but I must at same time say that I have great fears about being able to obtain repayment.'

26 March 1846

William Blacker [Armagh] to J. MacKenzie Esq., Eileanach, Inverness, Scotland.

'If the potatoes you offer should arrive at Newry in all the month of April in perfect sound condition I should be willing to take the quantity mentioned in yours of 24th inst. at 3s. 6d. per cwt. of 112 lbs. I should have given 4s. 6d. a fortnight since but there now appears a much better supply in this country than was thought to exist. There must be at least 8 working days for delivery after notice of arrival. The price I now offer is above the selling price at present and you will therefore be very particular as to the soundness, for if they should arrive in any partial degree diseased they would not be bought for seed, and I could not of course be expected to take them, but I don't apprehend there would be any loss in selling them for food on account of the owners, if no very much diseased. The cargo to be delivered on the quay free from all charges.'

P.S. 'Pray answer by return of post to say what time the cargo may be expected but I rather think these terms will be under what you may be able to get elsewhere.'

29 March 1846

William Blacker, Armagh to William Cotter Kyle Esq., Clare Street, Dublin. Letter noting that 60 or 70 tenants on the Dungannon school lands will not be able to put in their crops without assistance and suggesting a depot for Indian meal to restrain price rises.

'... Generally speaking I am well convinced there is food enough in the country but people who have it will not bring it to market, being in expectation of getting higher prices a month or two hence. It would therefore be a great advantage to have a depot at Coalisland (to which place there is water carriage) of the Indian meal which if retailed in some quantities at one penny per pound would have a great effect in keeping down prices.

'I have perfect confidence in Mr. Perrie's honesty and capability and if you could get a grant for the school lands I think I could be answerable to have it correctly accounted for according to whatever rules should be laid down for the delivery of it. There being no gentleman living on the estate or in the neighbourhood who would be likely to take an interest in the matter I should hope the Relief Commission would not refuse the application.

P.S. 'In regard to the seeds the ground is now fit for sowing and there is not a moment to be lost.'

1 April 1846

William Blacker, Armagh to William Cotter Kyle Esq., 8 Clare Street, Dublin. Letter resigning the agency of the Dungannon school lands and suggesting that he be replaced by his assistant William Wann who has been working with him for 21 years and is personally acquainted with every tenant.

'My first inducement to apply for the agency of the Dungannon school lands was not for the sake of the emolument but to see whether I might not be able to improve (?) the condition of the people and the property but for some time past any satisfaction to be derived from motives of that kind has been completely put an end to, by finding that my agriculturist had twice narrowly escaped assassination, without any apparent anxiety on the part of the tenantry having been manifested to discover the assassins or bring them to justice. I am therefore anxious to resign the charge of the property which I think may be more conveniently done now when the annual accounts have just been settled than at any other time.

'In making the Board acquainted with this decision I am anxious to refer to the merits of the young man Mr. William Wann who has had from the first the charge of keeping all the accounts of the estate and who for 3 years when the state of my health rendered me unable to attend to it had the entire management ...'

30 March 1846

William Blacker, Armagh to Thomas Anderson, Flowerdale, Poolewe (?), Rossshire. Letter concerning a delivery of seed potatoes at Newry.

'I am favoured with yours of the 7th which appears to me to have been a long time on the way and if this is as long getting to hand unless you use great dispatch it will be impossible to have the potatoes here in time for seed. I am willing however to comply with your terms that is to pay £3 6s. per ton on 20 cwt. delivered on the quay of Newry all perfectly sound on or before the 12th May. The price here is in general 5d. to 5½d. the stone of 14 lbs. but I wish them for a change of seed. However I don't think if they arrive too late for selling for that purpose there can be any risk of your being at a loss by them for there is no chance I think of sound potatoes being cheaper than these prices. You will give the master directions immediately on arrival to write to Mr. John Mitchell, Markethill letting him know of his arrival when immediate attention will be paid to his delivery and do you write me by return of post to Armagh letting me know whether you are positively determined on sending them as I may be able to persuade some people to wait a day or two for them. Write to me by return at any rate ...'

P.S. 'If the vessel can be dispatched before 1st May W.B. will take chance of it being in time if sound but he begs every expedition will be used.'

15 April 1846

William Wann [Markethill] to Rev. William Atwell, Clonoe Rectory, Stewartstown. Letter referring to the distress of some tenants on the estate of the Dungannon school lands in his parish suggesting the formation of a local relief committee to get Government aid.

'I think a number of the school land tenants in your parish will stand in need of some relief soon and it has occurred to me that it would be very desirable to try and get from Government some help in the way of Indian meal.

'Mr Blacker is willing to render any aid he can but I believe none will be granted unless to local committees and I think one might be formed in your neighbourhood. Coalisland would be a good depot for it. I shall be glad to hear from you on this matter ...'

4 May 1846

William Blacker, Armagh to J. MacKenzie Esq., M.D., Colleonard near Inverness. Letter acknowledging the arrival of a ship load of potatoes and discussing arrangements for sending 25 tons of oatmeal on the return journey as required. He refers to the new edition of his pamphlet and asks him to have it translated into gaelic 'the landlord's edition is the best and contains a good many important considerations and debatable matter.'

[1846]

William Blacker, Markethill to The Secretary's Education Office, Marlborough Street, Dublin.

'I beg to call your attention to the payment so long due to the Earl of Gosford for the outlay upon the school and teacher's house here. I believe all forms have been complied with and the extraordinary expenses of this year in giving employment to labourers, purchasing seeds, meal and other assistance to the poor have been so extensive that I should be very considerably convenienced by a remittance of whatever amount the Board think proper to contribute.

'I am happy to tell you the agricultural department seems to succeed and we have now as many scholars as the accommodation is adequate to. I allude to boarders. There is still a great unwillingness in the day boys to work, and I am only waiting to let there be more visible advantage from the tuition to discharge such from the agricultural class as will not give their personal labour for the time appointed. Perhaps it might be attended with some good effect if your inspector was to assemble the class at his next visit and lecture them upon the necessity of it and dismiss those who would not give the labour required ...'

17 June 1846

William Blacker, Armagh to Messrs. John McCall & Co., Glasgow. Letter sending a small sample of a cargo of 40 tons of oatmeal which he has for sale.

'... I should be willing to deliver it free on board at Newry for £13 10s. per ton should you be unable to get more for it. If put in bags the purchaser to pay the cost of them. The meal has been bought for the use of the poor but not having been wanted I am desirous of disposing of it and this offer is made subject to its being on hand when answer arrives ...'

12 July 1846

William Blacker, Armagh to M. S. Small, Markethill.

'The appearance of disease in the potato crop and the constant wet weather has made doubt as to the propriety of selling the oatmeal at so great a loss as I was willing to suffer when I spoke to you last. I hear Indian meal and oatmeal have both advanced in consequence of above circumstances but I think that I would still be inclined to sell at £13 per ton deliverable here [Markethill].

22 July 1846

William Blacker, Gosford Castle, Markethill to Maxwell Close Esq., Drumbanagher. Letter discussing an abatement of rent because of the failure of the potato crop.

'My dear Close, I am informed through a circular channel, but one on which I place some reliance, that some of the party at tomorrow's dinner will bring on a discussion about the potato crop and you are likely to be called on to say whether you intend to make any and what abatement.

'I think it best to mention this that you may not be taken unprepared. You know my sentiments but I do not pretend to urge you to adopt them. Matters may get better or worse, but taking the actual state of things I should be most happy if Lord G[osford]'s abatement should have the effect of securing the rest and you have still the power of saying you reserved your declaration for the present occasion. If money could be raised to be laid out in draining I should be anxious to do still more but I don't know what capability there is of this in your case.

'I hope we shall not get into the same state as the south appears to be in by yesterday's Mail, but I don't like to do anything that might appear like intimidation and would rather anticipate demands than yield to them. I most sincerely hope you will decide for the best yours very affectionately.'

30 September 1846

William Wann, Markethill to Dan Scallan Dooish, Drumquin. Letter informing him that Mr. Blacker is sending down a Mr. Ringland to advise tenants on his estate how to make drains etc.

'... He will be able to state the depth of the drain, width and price by the perch as well as to lay out the fields most desirable to be drained and the way they should be made but Mr. Blacker is strongly of opinion that grain will be cheaper after some time and advises the tenants to sell their corn and pay their rent and he will, if they choose, afterwards pay them in money for making the drains, merely charging 5 per cent on it till the sum is repaid. I send you a printed notice as to draining written by a Mr. Smith the best drainer in the 3 Kingdoms ...'

5 October 1846

William Blacker, Markethill to Chairman, Board of Works, Dublin. Letter forwarding an application from the Earl of Gosford and Viscount Acheson for an advance of money to drain a portion of the demesne of Gosford, the former being tenant for life in possession and the latter in remainder, which is thought to be a sufficient ownership to qualify under the Act.

'... The estimate is higher than the wages which we have heretofore usually paid for similar work but as it appears to me an able-bodied man will not be able to earn more than 13d or 14d in one of these short days, which is scarcely sufficient to support a small family at present price of provisions I consider that the rates proposed are as low as can be reasonably offered ...' 30 October 1846

William Blacker, Chairman to the Relief Committee of Markethill to Sir R[andolph] Routh [Relief Commission], Dublin.

'I have been requested to forward the enclosed statment which I can confirm by stating that I found it impossible to get machinery to work out any system of relief in the relief district owing to its extending into portions of four or five parishes which so divided the attention of the clergy that they could not devote themselves to the distribution of such funds as might be collected and without their assistance the business could not be carried on. In consequence of this it has become very general that the clergy in every parish have collected funds and distribute relief within the bounds of their respective parishes which seems to work extremely well.

'Very great exertions have been made in this parish which comprises very nearly the entire of the relief district originally marked out according to the limits of the Petty Sessions of Markethill. You will perceive from within that the extent is fully as large as any one committee can attend to efficiently and that funds collected being monthly the entire contribution may be considered fully equal to between £600 and £700 and notwithstanding the relief afforded, distress is found to be augmenting and must continue to augment for several months to come. Under such circumstances I trust we may hope for some assistance from government through your recommendation.

'There have already been some attempts at violence and it is impossible to foresay (?) to what extremities the population may be driven.

'All those signing the within are members of the relief committee as constituted by law.'

11 January 1847

William Blacker, Markethill to Mr. Fyffe, Arvagh, Cavan. Letter on behalf of Lord Gosford who is ill stating that his Lordship is very conscious of the ingratitude of tenants on his Cavan estate who have entered into a combination not to pay rent after his expenditure and assistance given them.

'... He is however unwilling to put the law in force if by dividing the payment it can be avoided. He considers that those who have had anything to sell are as well able to pay rent as ever they were, and who have followed your advice and hold 10 or 15 acres should have as much to take to market as would have sufficed. Half an acre of turnips would sell for more than a year's rent and leave stock and crop to the family. From such as have not been able to spare anything for sale he is willing for the present to allow them to lodge the half year's rent according to your letter, the abatement of potato land not to be given until the other half year is paid which must be before the June sessions ...

'I am surprised they don't incline to earn money levelling their own ditches which with the potato rent would be nearly a half year's rent. I beg you will tell them from me that not a tenant on the estate will be able to hold his land unless he levels his ditches and keeps his cattle in the house so as to manure a larger portion of his land and have more turnips and more cattle. They may as well just sell and go to America at once for they will get more now than ever they will get again if they don't choose to follow this plan. Secure the names of those that will drain.'

11 January 1847

William Blacker, Armagh to W. Stanley Esq., Commissariat Office, Dublin Castle.

'I am favoured with your letter of 3rd inst. notifying a recommendation for £186 8s. 4d. to be granted to the relief committee for Mullabrack and Kilcluney which however is much short of the amount of subscriptions last forwarded to you. I apprehend this must arise from some clerical error as Sir R. Routh's letter to me of the 19th February enclosing a donation of £15 from the British Relief Association distinctly states that an equivalent would be granted for that, and any other subscriptions that could be obtained. The committee therefore trust that on referring to said letter you will have the goodness to recommend a full equivalent in conformity therewith. Should this not be complied with the committee are anxious to know what subscriptions are disallowed.

'The outlay in relief is daily increasing and likely still more to increase and they hope the grant will not be curtailed upon any slight grounds.

P.S. 'I am sorry to state that fever of a very malignant kind has been brought into this parish (Mullabrack) by persons leaving the Armagh workhouse and there is every probability of its spreading in every direction.'

6 March 1847

William Blacker, Armagh to Messrs. Gladstone and Serjeantson, Liverpool. Letter concerning a cargo of 60 tons of guano for delivery at Newry for the Earl of Gosford.

P.S. 'I am assisting a poor man of the name of James McConnell to go to America by way of Liverpool and when he shows you that he has paid his passage money or part of it so as to ensure there is no trick played, I shall thank you to advance him four pounds and add it to the guano invoice.

20 March 1847

William Blacker to the Commissioners of Public Works [Dublin]. Letter pointing out the practical difficulties in seeking to carry out land drainage schemes under the Land Improvement Act for the purpose of giving employment to tenants.

'I am informed by Mr. Griffith that before any grant under the Land Improvement Act can be sanctioned by you everything must be complied with according to the letter of the Act, and that a report stating the present and improved value of the fields to be drained with a plan estimate and specification must accompany the application and further that the fields intended to be drained should be marked upon the ordnance survey. If such requirements are insisted on, I apprehend the present Act will be as great a failure as its predecessor the Million Act as far as the North of Ireland is concerned but seeing that by sections 16 and 18 full power is given to you to alter these requirements in any manner you may think proper I take the liberty with great respect on the part of the Earl of Gosford (to whose application Mr. Griffith's reply referred) to lay before you some particulars which I have some hopes may induce you to issue such instructions as may be more practicable and attended with less expense and delay.

'In the first place the ordnance survey of the County Armagh has not been laid down in fields and the scale is so minute that it will be exceedingly difficult so accurately to specify each particular field (which in this part of Ireland seldom exceeds in extent an acre or an acre and a half statute measure) and the drains to be made thereon, with such precision as to form any satisfactory or correct record of the work proposed to be done and as it is his Lordship's object by the application to afford to each of his tenants the option of remunerative employment upon reproductive work upon his own farm, some of whom may and others may not be inclined to avail themselves of said option, there is not only the difficulty upon stated of accurately inserting the fields and drains upon the ordnance survey but there is the further objection that if this even was accomplished the record so made would not be of any certain value as the proposed drainage there stated might never be carried into effect by the tenant.

'The importance of the foregoing is much heightened by the fact that the number of his Lordship's tenants in the county of Armagh are somewhere about 1,100 each of whom would have the privilege of draining one or two fields, besides which in his estate in county of Cavan there are 400 to 500 more. You must therefore be aware gentlemen that to insist upon such a condition as this if the Bill is to be a practical measure and generally acted on, is at once to put a veto upon the whole operation of the Act, for the surveyors could not be found to comply with the demand in any reasonable time and the expense and delay in the first instance and again in the verification survey to be made by your officers will naturally deter most people from embarking in any improvement subject to such drawbacks.

'In the second place as there does not appear to be any authority under the Act to improve the outfall for the water by the deepening of the streams which generally forms the boundaries of properties, the drainage improvements will in general be confined to what is commonly known under the name of frequent or thorough drainage and for this it would seem that to make detailed plans estimates and specifications for 2,000 or 3,000 distinct fields would seem to be an unnecessary and unreasonable requirement inasmuch as the drains are universally made up and down the slope at different depths and distances apart, according to the nature of the soil when opened up, until which is done neither depth distance or expense of making the drains can be accurately ascertained ...'

'In the third place as to the valuation of the improvements to be effected, is not the consent of the landlord and tenant to submit to a levy of 6½ per cent upon the sum advanced the very best evidence that the nature of the case will admit of that the improvement will be equal to the outlay, and are not the people who live on the lands, and are locally acquainted with their nature and quality as competent judges of the prospect of improvement as any inspectors you can send, be they who they may ... it does seem that the expenses and delay of a separate valuation of so many detached patches of land might be dispensed with and why should the landlord be supposed to be likely to throw away money borrowed from government in draining land that did not require it, more than money borrowed from any other creditor in the outlay of which he is no way restricted.

'All that government can claim interference in is to see that there is actual work done for the money and that it is laid out for the object stated in doing which there can be no difficulty as the drains will speak for themselves and any competent person can easily judge whether they should cost the sum charged for them.

'I believe I was the first person who ever proposed that government should advance money to individuals for the purpose of thorough drainage and for this reason that no imposition could be practised in this respect and that if there was any other the parties could only cheat themselves as the security would always be undeniable ...

'Supposing the grant to be limited took two year's rental of the property so that each tenant might be enabled to consume in the support of himself and his family the entire produce of his farm and earn the amount of his rent by his labour in improving his land, by drainage I should hope that in the third year the produce might be so far increased that he might then be able to support himself upon his grain crops even supposing the failure of the potato crop to continue, and be able to meet the payment of his rent and all other demands against him without further assistance and in order to facilitate this desirable state of things I venture to propose that the Board of Works should ... only require ... the names of the townlands in which the proposed drainage was intended ...'

[April 1847]

William Blacker, Parthenon Club [London to Richard Griffith Esq., Board of Works, Dublin. Letter detailing the difficulties and delays in getting a grant to carry out drainage work on Lord Gosford's estate for the employment of the tenants. He points out that Mr. McDonnell agent for the Earl of Antrim's estate at Glenarm has been allowed 22 years for repayment of loans under drainage presentments but in spite of this is stated 'there was no power given by the Act to prolong the repayment beyond 10 years.

'... On the whole I am so vexed and dispirited by seeing the way things are carried on and the money spending to promote idleness, most likely never to be repaid and that difficulties put in the way of promoting employment the repayment of which is amply secured, that I am almost tempted to give up my agencies and not fret myself any longer about the matter and I certainly should do so only that I dread the thought of being left without anything to do.

'I can't send you a fresh application without having a regular form sent me. If you will do this I will send it to Markethill with the necessary instructions as to filling it up but as to mapping the fields on the ordnance survey it could not be done at a less expense of time and money than a new survey and when it was done what would be the use of it. It would be no record of what was actually done.'

12 June 1847

William Blacker, Mullabrack to the Earl of Gosford, Gosford Castle. Letter discussing a government loan for drainage work.

'... I wish you would give me in a letter what your opinion is as to drainage with the government money. I can't get a proposal from a surveyor as to his terms for preparing the documents required by the Board of Works and they will only say they will be as reasonable as possible. I don't like to engage anyone without knowing your determination which I should like to send Lord Acheson for his approval. In his last he was apparently against it and there is no doubt that to pledge yourself for 800 or 900 a year to be paid punctually is in these times a matter requiring very great consideration notwithstanding that tenants may undertake to pay the greater proportion of it, nevertheless if I was in your place I should do it as the best thing to be done under present circumstances.

'... Take a little time to consider of these matters and write me some directions that I can act upon. I shall call upon you in your room between 11 and 12 tomorrow. I am able to go about a little in the morning but in the evening I get very bad.'

15 August 1847

Lord Gosford, Gosford Castle, Markethill to William Blacker.

'My dear Blacker, I certainly am very desirous to make some improvements on my property in the way of draining. I see no other plan more likely to enable the tenants to pay rent but before I embarked, I should like to ascertain what I am about, not to run risks, but to know the extent of my liabilities before I commence. I have heard so many contradictory statements on his head that I find that it is no easy matter to come to anything like a conclusion.

'I apprehend the tile manufactory may be an expensive concern. However if I can be certain to keep within certain bounds and you can contrive to let me know the worst that can happen I should like to get a portion of the loan as the best mode that appears open to weather impending difficulties. 17 August 1847

William Blacker, Armagh to Lord Acheson, Worlingham Hall, Beccles, Suffolk. Letter enclosing copies of his letter to Lord Gosford and his Lordship's reply.

'I have been urging Lord Gosford for some time to come to some conclusion as to the expediency of borrowing from the Board of Works for drainage but he has always such a difficulty in making up his mind that I have been unsuccessful and must apply to you for assistance. I enclose a letter I wrote to him and his reply which I shall thank you to read and return to me with your observations.

'It appears to me it would be a great means of enabling the tenants to pay their rents but there is the greatest possible difficulty in getting stone drains properly executed and I recommend the establishment of a tile work. Reference however must be had to the means which may be available.

'You were saying I think you had thoughts of selling two livings; there is nothing here I am afraid. Will you let me hear from you with the least possible delay.

'Our weather is very fine and the potatoes are still very generally well spoken of but I have little expectation of the bulk of the crop keeping through the winter. Several fields that were sound 3 or 4 days ago are infected now and what is curious there is scarce an instance of the blossoms producing seed.' 18 August 1847

William Blacker, Markethill to Col. Close, 9 Leinster Street, Dublin. Letter enclosing his final statement of account as agent with a cheque for £840 17s. 1d.

'My dear Maxwell ... I lament mostly exceedingly that I have not been able, with the utmost exertion that could be used to return a smaller sum in arrear but it has not been possible and I doubt whether it will ever be reduced unless some change comes over the times or that you adopt some measures to enable the tenants to work it up by drainage and levelling ditches. In which case I think some better and stricter superintendence than (?) Miline (?) can give will be necessary to see that the work is carefully and perfectly performed.

'You will see that the Drumbanagher estate has paid a full year's rent and a trifle over and the Acton has only fallen short about £200 but the Brootally arrears are increased to a great extent notwithstanding that the land is much lower let there than the Acton and Drumbanagher lands which shows very forcibly the advantage derived from the better cultivation of the land.

'The Brootally estate was improving rapidly as the bailiff will tell you from the time I got the management of it up to the time of the potato failure which ruined a large proportion of the tenants and as I have already said I don't think it will be possible for them to liquidate their arrears except by working it up in permanent improvements.

'Upon examining the list of ejectments you will see my serving more would have only been putting money into the pockets of attorneys without benefitting you for the ejectments taken out in January last are almost every one unsettled and if the parties were turned out the land in most cases would have remained waste which would have had a very bad effect as an example in the estate and would have been a certain loss to you whereas by letting them remain there is a chance they may yet recover as the actual arrear is not so great as it appears, the Brootally rental being made up to last November whereas the Acton and Drumbanagher is made up to last May ...'

18 April 1848