

JOURNAL

OF THE

STATISTICAL AND SOCIAL INQUIRY SOCIETY OF IRELAND.

PART XXXVI., *April*, 1869.

I.—*Address at the Opening of the Twenty-second Session.* By the
Right Hon. William Monsell, M.P.

[Read Friday, 22nd January, 1869.]

It has been the custom at the commencement of our annual sessions to direct attention to laws passed during the year, likely to affect our social or industrial progress, and to consider the remaining impediments to that progress, and the best means of overcoming them.

The first subject will occupy us but for a few moments. The Industrial Schools' Act, which has worked successfully in England for the last fourteen years, has been extended to Ireland by a bill introduced and passed by The O'Connor Don. The importance of this measure is shown by the report on Criminal Statistics just brought out by Doctor Hancock.

The only other measure to which I need refer is one in itself of great importance, and still greater on account of the principle involved in it—the transfer of the telegraphs of the United Kingdom to the government. These telegraphs were worked by private companies, mainly with a view to the interest of their shareholders, and only indirectly for the benefit of the public. They will now be worked as those of Belgium, and Switzerland, and France are. They will be brought closer to the population; the hours for their use will be extended; the charges for messages will be reduced; and facilities will be given by the Post-Office, into whose hands their working will be placed, for sending money orders by telegraph. It is unnecessary for me to say a single word on the advantages which this measure will confer upon the people.

For the rest, the last year is peculiarly worthy of observation. It closed the last series of five years that have elapsed since 1853, when the first vigorous effort was made to throw off the prostration caused by the great famine.

During the five years ending in 1858, great progress had been made. Taking the two tests of pauperism and investment, there remained but 41,970 in workhouses, and but 1,148 were in receipt of outdoor relief. The amount invested in government securities and banks had reached £58,251,000.

At the end of the next five years the workhouses had 57,926 inmates; the number on outdoor relief was 6,928; while the amount of investments had fallen to £52,031,000.

The last five years seemed to promise well for agricultural prosperity, but I regret to say that the increase of 16,000 recipients of outdoor relief, which took place between 1858 and 1863, has not been much reduced. On the 5th of December last there were 54,517 in the workhouses, while there were 16,246 on outdoor relief. Although the increase in outdoor relief may be in part attributed to a praiseworthy desire on the part of Boards of Guardians to act with increased liberality to the poor, so large an extension of outdoor relief, accompanied by so small a reduction of indoor relief, while simultaneously the population has been diminishing, is hardly reconcilable with the announcements we have heard of increasing prosperity.

Neither is a comparison between 1867 and 1868 satisfactory. The returns show that in December last there were 647 more inmates of workhouses, and 2,000 more receiving outdoor relief, than in the corresponding period of 1867.

Investments from 1863 increased rapidly from year to year, and on the 30th of June, 1867, had reached £58,184,000, being within £167,000 of the amount reached on the 31st of December, 1859. It is probable—but, on account of a change which took place in 1867 in the period for making up the accounts, we cannot ascertain the fact precisely—that in December, 1867, the amount had reached the point from which, since 1859, it had fallen. During last year, however, the amount invested fell off again, and from June, 1867, to June, 1868, had decreased by £639,000. This decrease cannot be accounted for by any supposed distrust of government securities arising from Fenianism, for the investments in government stock and savings banks increased by £134,000. The falling off is altogether on deposits in banks. This falling off was to the extent of £774,244. Such a loss in twelve months, and the stoppage of increase in aggregate investments, which had been going on for the previous three years and a half, at the rate of £1,800,000 a year, show a total change for the worse of £2,440,000 in the year.

Such facts as these are not reassuring; but they may probably arise from temporary causes. The symptom to which I now ask your attention is far more deep-rooted and far more dangerous. More than a hundred and thirty years ago, Dean Swift denounced the diminution of tillage, and the increase of rude grass farming in Ireland. "Where the plough," he said, "has no work, one family can

do the business of fifty, and you may send away the other forty-nine—an admirable piece of husbandry, never known or practised by the wisest nations, who erroneously thought people to be the riches of a country.”

Our agricultural statistics show, for the last twenty years, a marked tendency towards the production of more cattle and less corn ; and this increased number of cattle has been fed not to any extent by an increased quantity of green crops, but by turning land from tillage into permanent pasture.

The anticipations of those who predicted that the repeal of the Corn Laws would be followed by a diminution of the average price of corn have not been fulfilled ; but a great increase in the price of meat has altered the relative prices of meat and of corn. No one, therefore, can wonder or lament that our farmers should attempt to accommodate their production to this altered state of prices.

I need not point out that green crops are essential to the successful production of meat. They are absolutely essential for the rearing, the feeding, and the furnishing of stock. In Ireland a scarcity of winter feeding may at any time produce disastrous results. The English and Scotch dealers fear to buy in times of dearth, and the scarcity of winter food in Ireland is rendered doubly scarce by the increased number of cattle, from this cause left on the farmer's hands during the winter. We have had more than one hay famine within the last few years, and at this present moment, though the unusual mildness of the winter has mitigated our danger, we are in anything but a satisfactory state. Messrs Ganly, Sons, and Parker, in an instructive circular, sounded the note of alarm during the autumn. “To our agricultural friends in Ireland,” they said, “we beg to offer our advice for the coming winter and spring as regards their cattle feeding. Supposing that English and Scotch farmers were prepared to feed the usual number of which they relieve us every autumn, it is quite clear that we should have but a scanty supply of hay and straw to keep up our usual succession of younger animals.” Messrs. Ganly then pointed out how, with the high price of hay in England, the usual safety-valve of export could not work ; and had it not been for the unusual softness of the winter, their apprehensions would have been fulfilled.

There is but one way of averting the recurrence of this danger. Without a proper rotation of crops it is impossible securely to provide winter food for cattle ; and, by means of such a rotation, not only would corn crops increase, but we should feed many more cattle than we do under our present rude system, and feed them better. This is clearly shown by a comparison of the agricultural statistics of Ireland with those of Scotland. The causes I have alluded to as influencing the production of cereals affected the one country just as much as the other.

Let me ask your attention to a table showing the respective changes in acreage under the various crops in the two countries during the last eleven years, and the corresponding changes in the number of live stock :—

	SCOTLAND.				IRELAND.		
	1856-7.	1867-8.	Increase (+) or Decrease —)		1856-7.	1867-8.	Increase (×) or Decrease (—)
	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.		Acres.	Acres.	Acres.
Wheat	243,240	124,683	— 118,557	Wheat .	544,348	286,790	— 257,558
Barley ...	182,062	219,515	+ 37,453	Barley ..	197,042	188,252	— 8,790
Oats ..	928,628	1,011,430	+ 82,802	Oats ...	2,009,185	1,699,919	— 309,266
Potatoes	144,585	166,939	+ 22,354	Potatoes	1,125,675	1,025,949	— 99,726
Turnips ...	468,411	488,812	+ 20,401	Turnips .	352,249	326,454	— 25,795
	Net Increase, ..		+ 44,453		Total Decrease, ...		— 701,135
Live Stock.	No.	No.	No.		No.	No.	No.
Cattle ..	970,742	1,050,917	+ 80,175	Cattle ...	3,604,406	3,620,352	+ 15,946
Sheep ..	5,749,864	7,112,112	+ 1,362,248	Sheep ..	3,573,273	4,822,444	+ 1,249,171
Pigs ..	136,639	139,614	+ 2,975	Pigs .	1,086,855	862,443	— 224,412
	Net Increase, ...		+ 1,445,398		Net Increase, ...		+ 1,040,705

From this table it appears that the only crop which has decreased in Scotland is wheat. In all the other crops in the table there has been an important increase, and there has been a net increase of acreage under these crops of 44,453 acres. In Ireland, upon the other hand, all these crops have decreased by 701,135 acres; and allowing for 121,389 acres of increase in flax, chiefly in one province, 579,746 acres have gone out of cultivation in eleven years. Turning to the live stock, we find that the superior system of farming in Scotland has permitted the large increase of live stock, amounting to 1,545,398, concurrently with the increased breadth of crops already mentioned; while in Ireland, where 579,746 acres have been turned into pasture land, we have only a net increase of 1,040,705, and of this only 15,946 were cattle. Each fresh head of cattle turns three-quarters of an acre from cultivation into pasture. Had our crops in 1868 preserved the same proportion to those of eleven years ago, as has been maintained in Scotland, we should have now

					Acres.
Wheat ...	...	...	...	...	278,734
Barley ...	...	...	...	...	237,579
Oats ...	...	...	...	...	2,188,443
Potatoes ...	...	...	...	...	1,299,713
Turnips ...	...	...	...	...	367,173
					4,471,642

Instead of which we have:

Wheat ...	...	286,790	
Barley ...	...	188,252	
Oats ...	...	1,699,919	
Potatoes ...	...	1,025,949	
Turnips ...	...	326,454	3,527,364
Difference ...	...	...	944,278

So that the Scotch system of farming would have kept in grain and green crops 944,278 acres converted under the Irish system into pasture, and in one province, to some extent, into flax, even supposing the increase of live stock to be no greater in Scotland.

Last year, happily, a change for the better took place. The extent under crops in 1868 appears from the Registrar-General's returns to have been 87,633 acres greater than the acreage of 1867. An important portion of this consisted, of course, of bog and waste lands reclaimed, but nearly 60,000 acres consist of pasture land converted back to tillage. This change was probably occasioned by the high prices of cereal produce. I am afraid that, as it was accompanied by a decrease of land under turnips to the extent of more than 15,000 acres, it affords no indication of progress towards the high farming system of preparing stock for the market.

I have dwelt at some length on this subject, for it is impossible, in my opinion, to over-rate its importance. I do not go so far as some who say that Ireland will go out of cultivation; but it is clear to me that unless this course be arrested—unless—which obviously

will require a large expenditure on farm buildings, on permanent improvements, and on cultivation—higher farming take the place of rude cattle feeding, our cattle may increase, though not at the ratio they would under a better system, but our population will diminish, as it has been steadily diminishing for the last twenty years; and let no one take comfort to himself at this prospect by the expectation that those who remain will be better off. The most miserable portion of the agricultural population is to be found in our grazing districts. The three great classes—landlords, farmers, and labourers—are bound together by links almost too minute to be discerned, but which yet no human power can sever. A pernicious system of agriculture, founded on narrow and selfish views, hiding the future behind the coarse veil of the present, re-acts with terrible force upon the class above, but it condemns the labouring man to idleness, to ignorance, to the absence of hope. In the last century, when our population was less than three millions, it made that population a dead weight instead of a source of wealth and power; now it will leave little prospect to our labouring classes of satisfying the aspirations increased education produces, through the legitimate channels of industry.

I have taken some pains to ascertain the condition of the population in the city of Limerick, the centre of a rich grazing district. In the Old Town the poor live generally in large, decaying, cottiered houses—a single family rarely occupying more than one room, and sometimes three or four families living together in the same room. There is seldom more than one bed for a family, and this bed consists frequently of straw, with an old quilt or blanket, to which are added at night the day garments of the family. The furniture is made up of an iron pot, a few old saucepans, a ricketty table, and one or two old chairs or stools—very often there is neither table nor chair. These dismal rooms are exposed day and night to cold, wind, and rain. In the hearth there is seldom more fire than is necessary to keep the seed for meal time.

It is quite common to meet in these rooms grown persons who are unable to go out for days and weeks on account of want of clothes. When the minister of religion goes to visit the dying, he is often, when he requires a table, obliged to use his hat as a substitute.

These are painful facts. Upon this picture, however habit may dull its impression on our minds, every foreigner that comes among us looks with horror and astonishment. It is quite true that Ireland during the last twenty years has become more wealthy—her diminished population have generally become better clothed, better housed, and better fed, than they were twenty years ago. Education has made remarkable progress. Habits of local self-government have been acquired; but the light that comes from this improvement, from education, from habits of self government, shows more clearly the dark spots that remain. Our people can compare their condition with that of their respective classes in other civilized countries; they find themselves still at the bottom of the ladder of civilization. To acquiesce in this position, to be contented with the lowest place,

however admirable in individuals, would be base and cowardly in a nation. There is no use in trying either to delude ourselves or to delude others.

Still the bone and sinew of our population are leaving our shores. Still there are more persons amongst us than in any other country in Europe, upon whom from their cradles to their graves no ray of hope ever dawns. That rude cattle-farming against which Swift directed his sarcasms, is increasing from year to year. Turnips and other green crops decrease while cattle increase. We have but one flourishing manufacture, and that is confined to a corner of the north.

Land sells for little more than twenty years' purchase—much about the same rate it sold for in the days of Arthur Young. Within the last two years there has been something very near a famine in three western unions.

Nine months ago the Lord Lieutenant might have written, as Lord Cornwallis wrote, "the country is quiet, but on an invasion with prospects of success, the ill disposition of the Irish would shew itself in hostility and outrage." Nine months ago an Irish orator might have said as Grattan said, "what you trample upon in Europe will sting you in America."

The Habeas Corpus Act has been again for the fifth time since the Union suspended. Can we wonder that Ireland is not looked upon as a desirable field for investment? Does not the language of those, be they statesmen or economists, who cry, "Let well—very well—alone," jar against our reason? Am I exaggerating? are these dark colours the reflection of my imagination? I must appeal to your own experience. You know well that one truth does not exclude another that is distinct from it; and that however long and however fast Ireland has been improving, all that improvement leaves her a sad and painful contrast to the rest of the United Kingdom and of Europe. Why is this so? What are the obstacles to our more rapid progress? This certainly is no barren speculation. It touches our consciences as well as our hearts.

The answer most popular at the other side of the channel is that we are Celts, and that the Celtic race wants those qualities necessary to successful industry; that it has flash but no steadiness; that we have not the depth and perseverance of the Saxon. Yet it is certain that the Irish people are not more Celtic than the people in many thriving parts of England, and that, among the most Celtic portion of the English, manufacturing industry has made rapid progress. The wholesale massacre of the Britons by the Saxons is now acknowledged to be a myth. Although Saxon took the place often of Celtic chiefs, the mass of the population in nearly one-half of England remained Celtic after the Saxon invasion; and in Northumberland and Yorkshire a large proportion of the names signed in the reign of Henry II. to charters and deeds were Celtic. On the other hand, some of the counties of Ireland, *e. g.* Tipperary, that are considered to exhibit most of those faults attributed to the Celtic race, are the least Celtic in what is popularly believed to be the Celtic part of Ireland. Recent investigations prove that the laws and institutions of the ancient Irish were not merely analogous to, but nearly

identical with, those called Anglo-Saxon. But even if we accepted the popular notion that the Irish are a Celtic people, does it follow that they are therefore incapable of plodding industry? The Celtic parts of England, as I have said, are thriving and industrious. The valley of the Clyde has a large Celtic population; it is also the valley of successful manufactures. In Belgium it is Celtic Liege and the valley of the Meuse in which the greatest industrial activity is visible.

Those who believe the Irish race to be incapable of industrial progress, have only to look across the Atlantic to America and Canada, or to see what Mrs. Chisholm described to me as the thriving industry of the Irish in Australia. In those countries, particularly in the United States, the first generation of emigrants are often unskilled in labour, and not sufficiently educated, but their children, who share there with the native-born American an atmosphere of industrial activity and skill from their childhood, are second to none in industrial success.

Is the obstacle then to be found in religion? Was Colonel Senior right when he said the religion of the Irish people—preaching contempt of worldly goods and worldly pleasures—does not promote the virtues that produce prosperity in the world? Look at the unequalled material prosperity of Belgium; travel over the Rhemish provinces, the most prosperous and most wealthy portion of Prussia; see the activity of Lille, and Lyons, and Rouen, or the entire absence of destitution and of misery in the plains of Touraine.

Is it the absence of coal and the consequent impossibility of introducing manufactures into Ireland? I certainly do not underrate the importance of manufactures. I know well that while making allowance for the fact that the limit of exemption from income tax was £50 in 1815, and £100 in 1856, land and farmers' profits were assessed in Great Britain, in 1815, at £63,283,000, and in 1856 at £62,387,000; while the profits from houses, realised property, and trades and professions had risen from £48,000,000 in the first year to £141,000,000 in the last.

Such progress as Great Britain has made through the development of her manufactures, I admit at once we cannot hope to make; but in purely agricultural districts, whether there or on the continent, none of that squalid misery which shocks our eyes is to be met with.

There are a variety of articles too long to recount, into the manufacture of which coal does not enter, which we might make for ourselves, and which still we are contented to import. The chairs we sit on, the carriages we drive in—to mention but two instances—surely might be made at home.

Even where coal is required, it is certain that Welsh coal and iron can be imported into Cork and Waterford at a much less cost than they can be brought to supply the flourishing iron foundries of London. The lead and silver melting works at Ballycorris and the bottle works at Ringsend and the North Wall—manufactures which chiefly depend for their success on the cheapness of fuel—

are flourishing and remunerative. Indeed, as on another occasion I remarked, scientific improvements are tending every day more and more to equalize the conditions of production. M. Cocquier's report to the Belgian government shows that English skill sends back to America in the shape of woven fabrics, American-grown cotton; and on the other hand, American skill sends back to England spades, and axes, and hatchets made of Sheffield steel. But we are not shut out even from the branch of manufacture which has most contributed to the wonderful progress of Great Britain. Cotton goods made at Drogheda command a higher price in the Chinese and Indian markets than any made in the Lancashire mills. A brother of Mr. Gladstone's, largely engaged in the Indian cotton trade, informed Mr. Whitworth that the goods with the Drogheda Boyne Mills mark on them stand better than any others in the market. Owing to our climate being more favourable than that of Lancashire to the working of cotton, seven and a half per cent. more can be turned out here than there by the same labour. Our cotton is less liable than theirs to breakage. Certainly, therefore, there is no solution for the problem we are investigating, to be found in our natural incapacity for manufactures; neither—as I think I satisfactorily proved on another occasion (I have not time now to repeat what I then said), are our people less capable of becoming skilled labourers and artisans than the English and Scotch; and as to strikes, both the annual statistics which show that there was not a single person tried for destroying machines or goods in process of manufacture in 1867, and only one for offences connected with combinations to raise wages, and the testimony I have received from every part of Ireland where factories exist, prove that strikes such as take place in England, with their boisterous meetings, noisy processions, fierce threats, deadly outrages, and complete and maintained organization, are unknown among us.

Are we suffering, then, from want of capital? Money is to be had at two and a half per cent and is only seeking profitable investment, and in the banks of Ireland there are on deposit-receipts at one per cent. £18,000,000.

Does the extreme subdivision of our farms make agricultural success impossible? Must we wait for more rapid progress, until another million of our population find a home beneath a foreign flag? In Belgium the average size of farms is about half the average size of farms in Ireland. Yet the Belgian farmers, on their small farms, with very short leases, and with the practice of raising the rent at the termination of those leases, are happy and prosperous.

But then, it may be said, the Belgian soil and climate explain this—that our climate and soil make rude grass farming a necessity. No doubt, although the drainage of the last 30 years has largely increased the productive power of the soil, still, particularly in arterial drainage, much remains to be done. The soil in extensive districts is still water-logged, and consequently winter tillage is difficult and spring labour is thrown forward. The harvest is

necessarily late, and the getting in crops in good condition is precarious. The cultivation of flax is injuriously affected, for it requires, more than any other crop, a finely pulverized soil—not water-logged. It is greedy of iron, which greatly deteriorates the value of the fibre, and unless the iron has been rendered insoluble by oxidation it gets into the plant. But a careful investigation, made lately by a most competent authority, has proved that for those staple crops, on which the prosperity of Belgian agriculture depends, the climate and soil of Ireland are at least as favourable as the climate and soil of Belgium. For those crops the mildness of our winters gives full compensation for the heat of the Belgian summer, and this is true not only as regards dairy produce, on which the Belgian farmer principally relies, but as to flax also. The gross produce of the raw material is greater in Ireland than in Belgium. It is in the preparation of flax that Belgium excels us; and yet strange to say, though we vote money to encourage flax production, we have not taken a single step to show how it ought to be treated after it is grown. I may remark that those who speak of the mean temperature of the south of Ireland as being too high for flax, utterly ignore the fact that flax is especially a summer plant, and that it is therefore the mean summer temperature that alone can affect its growth.

Is the amount of crime greater in Ireland than in England, in proportion to its population? The entire number of indictable offences, not disposed of summarily in Ireland in 1867, was 30 per cent. less than the number in a corresponding portion of the population in England in 1866,—the date of the last English return. The verdicts of wilful murder brought in by coroners' juries in Ireland were 75; being 40 less than the number (115) which the 438 verdicts for murder in England would give for a population equal to that of Ireland.

Where, then, is the obstacle we are seeking for to be found? If it be not race, or religion, or climate, or crime, what is it?

Your Society has never confined its discussions within any narrow limits. With great advantage to the country, many social and political questions, such for instance as the relations between landlord and tenant, have been discussed most ably within these walls. I am not afraid therefore to face the question I have proposed. I am sure I am expressing the belief of every thoughtful man I have the honour to address, when I say that the obstacles to our progress are far more moral than economical—a sad inheritance left to us by previous centuries—and that it is as difficult for any one ignorant of our history to form a correct estimate of our position and prospects, as it would be for a physician to pronounce on the state of, and prescribe the remedies for, a patient attenuated by long ill-health, without knowing something of his previous habits and history. But accurate knowledge of the social and political condition of Ireland in past times, and particularly in the last century, has another advantage also. It shows us that every bad and dangerous symptom we now lament is the effect of causes which, although the effects remain, either have been removed or

which it is in our power to remove; and so it supplies that which must always be the living and the motive power of the true statesman, Party leaders for party objects may trade on incurable grievances, but the statesman imbued with Christian earnestness, with sympathy, with charity, never attacks a malady he does not hope to cure. Hope is the mainspring of his energies. To evils that are inevitable he resigns himself; but sympathy for his fellow men sustains him in any conflict—however prolonged—however difficult—when he has a well grounded hope that his exertions will be crowned with success. Well! it is in the dark and hideous mine of the last and previous centuries that this precious jewel is to be found. It is in the contemplation of the means by which the moral and physical debasement of the last century was produced, that we can hope for the future of Ireland.

As for me, at all events, I declare that if that history were not present to my mind, if I had not sounded the depth of that moral abyss, I should fold my hands and adore the mysterious Providence that had doomed us to eternal degradation, and submit as best I could to the decrees of an inevitable fate.

We need not discuss how far the laws and constitutions of independent nations are the result of their character and conduct, nor whether it be true that each such nation has the laws and institutions it deserves to have. To dependent nations, at all events, this theory cannot apply. They may struggle for institutions conformable to their wants, but if they struggle unsuccessfully they succumb. The dominant power forces upon them such laws as its supposed interests demand. The natural civilization of a subject nation is crushed out, or at all events prevented from developing, and at last the national life becomes effete, and often ceases to gnaw the chains that bind it down. The effect of such a condition is much more to degrade and vitiate a people than to deprive them of animal spirits. Take the extremest case—that of slaves. They become animalized. Their gaiety may be quickened by the removal of all care for the future, and of moral responsibility for the present; but on the other hand, with self-respect, all moral elevation, power of voluntary self-sacrifice, and consequently of willing and continuous exertion perishes. The soul is gone. The animalized being tends to apathy and indolence, and only hurts itself by its spurts of spasmodic activity.

This depth of hopeless degradation cannot be reached by a Christian nation, for the religion that preserves its morals prevents the utter annihilation of its self-respect. So the old society that from the sixth to the eighth century seemed with its rudeness and ignorance to be rapidly dissolving into chaos, was yet preserved from dissolution by the two enduring witnesses Rome had left—her church and her law. Still, although its moral soundness makes it capable of progress, how many generations are required to recover those qualities which degradation has impaired or eradicated. What a slow work education is! Far the greater part of it is given at the mother's knee, and the schoolmaster's lessons will have little influence on character if they are thwarted by the atmosphere of home.

Now I venture to assert that anyone, who with these considerations present to his mind, carefully studies the past history, down to a period within the memory of men now living, of the three southern provinces of Ireland, will wonder rather at the recuperative force displayed by the Irish people than at the slow rate of our present progress. I say the three southern provinces, because in a large part of Ulster the inhabitants were never deprived of freedom. The insurrection of the Hearts of Steel in 1771, produced by the unjust administration of a great estate, and the emigration that carried off in the few subsequent years to America one-fourth of the capital of the province, and about thirty thousand of its most industrious and thriving inhabitants, to fight under the standard of Washington, no doubt affected seriously the prosperity of the North of Ireland; but no one can have looked into the county histories or the pamphlets of the last century, without being convinced that the Protestant inhabitants of Ulster were upon the whole a free and prosperous people.

In 1745, the period when the rest of Ireland had reached the lowest depth of misery, the Rev. William Sherry, in an oration published at the request of the leading men of Donegal, had to borrow the Eastern imagery of the prophet Isaiah to describe the happiness, and peace, and industrial progress of the various counties of Ulster. In 1757, a county history describes the County of Down as generally under tillage—its inhabitants not obliged to take up with the poor unwholesome diet which the commonalty of Munster and of Connaught had been forced to—and the writer, extending his view beyond the limits of the county, says, “The Northern inhabitants of Ireland are freed from much of that poverty and wretchedness too visible among the lower class of people in other parts of the kingdom. The inhabitants are warm, and well clad at church. Tillage and the linen manufacture keep them in constant employment and free from idleness.” When, some ten years later, the system of repairing county roads by duty work had caused a rising in the North, the grievance at the very next meeting of the Parliament was removed. Those who are acquainted with the pamphlet literature of the last century, will recollect how frequently the contrast between Ulster and the rest of Ireland is drawn out. “In the latter,” they say, “we see large tracts of the best land almost unpeopled; inhabited only by a few wretches dispersed among the beasts of the field, living in so miserable a state of poverty and barbarism as is a shame and reproach to a Christian country—being more vile than the condition of Indian savages; whereas in Ulster, where tillage has prevailed, how have the common people multiplied since the late happy revolution under our deliverer King William! In how clean and decent a manner do they live! How warm are their houses! How clean and decent their apparel! How wholesome their food! How flourishing their manufacture! How great their industry!” It is evident that whatever faults there may have been in the laws by which the people of Ulster were governed, or in the manner of their administration, neither in the laws nor in the administration was

there anything to depress the spirit or degrade the character of the majority of its inhabitants.

But the three southern provinces present a different picture. In 1745, the last of those who had fought at Limerick was dead—450,000, according to Newenham, had taken service in France. The penal laws had extirpated or converted the upper classes. The pamphlets of the time say, “These laws have done their work. It is useless to maintain them longer on the statute book.” So completely prostrate was the nation, that even the presence of Charles Edward in Scotland and his first successes did not produce even the slightest movement. There were then a population utterly deprived of political rights—without the slightest influence over their own affairs—incapable of filling even the meanest offices. Their tradesmen could not have more than two apprentices. Mere Irish could have none but the lowest trades. They could not acquire property in land, lend money on mortgage, teach schools, act as guardians to their own children. “They were,” says Burke, “kept alive only to insult in their persons every one of the rights and feelings of humanity.” They thirsted for education. Curious histories are related of bare-legged boys flocking to remote places where some schoolmaster of note kept school under the canopy of heaven. When Owen Connellan came from Galway to Burren, a grazing district, where lodging could not be procured because houses were few, he and his companions carried off the schoolmaster by night across the Shannon to a district more populous, and where lodging was consequently more easily procured. Though there was less than one half the present population, a large proportion of that half never received money wages. While in England, as Arthur Young shows, the average rate of wages was 7s. 9d. per week, the Irish labourer was remunerated for his labour by a small patch of potato ground, for which he gave duty work at 4½d. or 5d. per day. “Most of the people,” says a clergyman of the Established Church, who wrote in 1787—a period when their condition was much better than it had been twenty years before—“Most of the people are cottagers, peasants, herdsmen, beggars, idlers, boxers, rioters, plunderers, and the like.” “The first landlords,” says Campbell, were “absentees, the second graziers; the only tiller of the ground stood in a third or sometimes a fourth degree from the original proprietor. The little culture carried on was exercised by the very dregs of the people upon one acre or two in the worst manner. The middle men, encamped in a hostile country, surrounded by their little under-tenants, proved the most oppressive species of tyrants that ever lent assistance to the destruction of a country. They were despots who yielded obedience in whatever concerned the poor to no law but that of their own wills. They could invent no order that their dependants dared to refuse to execute. Disrespect was punished with the horsewhip. I have myself heard from one now dead who witnessed it, of the ear of a groom being nailed to the stable door by his master. Whole strings of cars were whipped into the ditch to make way for a gentleman’s carriage.”

The administration of justice was just what it might be expected

to be under such circumstances. A remarkable pamphlet, published in 1749, asserts that many men whose only fault was poverty were sent away to our plantations to satisfy the resentment or malice of some abandoned esquire or perjured pettifogger. The judicial murder of Father Sheehy a few years later is so well known that I need not describe it; and even so late as the time when Dr. Bell wrote on the manners and condition of the peasantry of Ireland, if a poor person was injured by one in a higher station, he might as well apply to the Grand Seignior for a guard of janissaries, as to the laws of his country for redress. It was in the first years of the present century—my authority is the late Judge Perrin—that in a midland county a man was put on his trial for horse stealing. He prayed that his trial might not go on until his witnesses arrived. This the judge refused. The trial proceeded: the prisoner was convicted and sentenced to death. The judge proceeded into the civil court and commenced a record. A few minutes afterwards a noise of crying was heard. The sheriff, when called, said it was the crying of the witnesses who had arrived too late. He was told to stop it. He did so, but soon the crying recommenced. The judge adjourned the record for an hour, returned to the criminal court, had the prisoner brought back, sentenced him to be hanged then and there, and at the appointed hour proceeded with the record.

Together with this system of oppression, there was a perpetual interference by Parliament in every branch of domestic industry, either by laying on restrictions or giving bounties. Turn to the reports of the committees on trade of the Irish House of Commons, and you will find every imaginable experiment tried to galvanize industry, among a people whose energy the laws passed by that same House of Commons had crushed out. Thus a Government, whose legislation was generally directed to the repression of the springs of industry and progress, unwittingly contrived to inflict the severest wounds on the industry of the nation by its policy of protection. Thus the seeds were sown of tendencies to rely on government for everything. There were bounties on leather, bounties on the carriage of corn, bounties for fishing, grants for new machines; and these same records teem with accounts of acts of violence, the necessary result of the enforced ignorance and barbarism of the people. Strikes were conducted with a fury to which Sheffield and Manchester afford no parallel. These strikes raised the price of the manufactured articles sometimes fourfold. Manufacturers found that they could have their work done far cheaper in England. For instance, between 1770 and 1780, Mr. Robert Stephenson, a manufacturer of camp beds, found he could have his work done at Liverpool for two-thirds of what it would cost in Dublin, though much of the material was Irish. Mr. Cottingham, who brought some new patterns from Lyons for silk, had to fly under escort to the Castle. His looms were broken, and he gave up trade. Such was the reign of violence that about the middle of the century an unpopular Lord Lieutenant, in order to escape from the Castle to the place of embarkation, had to hire a mob; and in

1767 the officers sent by the serjeant-at-arms to summon witnesses in an election petition for Callan, in which Mr. Flood was the petitioner, were surrounded by men armed with pitch-forks and pikes like halberts, and had to fly for their lives. The committee, not being able to get the witnesses, abandoned its proceedings. As to agrarian disturbances—"White Boys," "Right Boys," and the like—the time would fail me to give a catalogue of their various designations. Unbound, as Mr. Curran said, to the Sovereign by any proof of his affection ; unbound to government by any instance of its protection ; unbound to the country or to the soil, by being destitute of any property in them ; it was no wonder that the peasantry should be ripe for rebellion and revolt. So far from being a matter of surprise it must naturally have been expected.

If laws educate, if the character of man is moulded by circumstances, what could human ingenuity have devised more surely calculated to produce anarchy, and to banish capital by making life and property insecure ? People not civilized trust to force instead of applying to law. Civilization was made impossible. There was enforced ignorance. Between classes there was contempt on one side, hatred on the other, distrust on both. The upper class looked to England as their country, for it was her power that protected them in their tyranny. The love for their country of the lower class necessarily took the form of hatred to the country that sustained their oppressors. There were no habits of industry, where industry could not benefit the industrious. There was a natural energy in the hearts of the people. The law would not permit them to apply it to sustained industry. This energy, therefore, manifested itself in spasmodic and lawless outbursts. The tillage of whole counties was confined to the holdings which cottiers living in cabins, compared with which the cabins of this day are palaces, paid for by duty labour. And all this existed long ; formed the mind of many successive generations ; it existed within the memory of men now living. There is no one of middle age in this room who has not conversed with those whose characters were formed while it was in full vigour.

Can it be wondered at then that its results remain ? Many of the institutions that embodied this political idea have no doubt fallen. Others totter to their fall. But the sea does not become calm the moment the storm has ceased to blow. Confidence—loyalty—are plants of slow growth. The evil seeds sown by the last century—distrust—hatred—separation of classes—the tendency to interpret every act of the government in the worst sense—all these are mitigated no doubt, but still they remain. Their fruit is constant restlessness, sometimes developing into revolution, and capital easily frightened flies to distant shores, and does not overflow on Ireland. I can conceive no more useful work for this Society than by careful and detailed investigations on the state of Irish society in past times, to show that those shortcomings, of which we are sometimes accused, are due neither to the national character of the people, nor the qualities of the soil, nor the dispensations of Providence, but to the impoverishing and debasing political system with which we were cursed.

I am afraid I am detaining you too long, but bear with me for a few moments, while I show in the fewest possible words the effect of this system in preventing the growth of manufactures. Its effect on agriculture is obvious. While the farm buildings of England, without which her improved agriculture could not exist, were being raised, our rural classes were living in pigsties and herding cattle ; while her people were acquiring skill and habits of industry, ours were living in enforced indolence. But how did this law-created barbarism act on our capacity for manufacturing development ? Industry, as I have remarked, is of slow growth. Except under special circumstances, such, *e. g.* as abundance of cheap fuel, a branch of industry cannot be established in a new seat, unless at a great expenditure of time and money. Aptitude and skill are only acquired by habit and education. In England and elsewhere great factories were in general preceded by a race of artizans—in other words, great centres of industry grew up generally amidst small centres of skilled labour. The industrial history of Sheffield and of Manchester is older than the steam engine, the gas forge, and the power loom. With the exception of a few northern centres of the linen trade, all our small trade centres were almost entirely destroyed by the barbarizing influences I have described, before the great changes effected in manufacturing industry by the substitution of steam power for hand labour. The age of the Peels and Watts found the people of Lancashire trained in all those habits and in all that skill which long industrial traditions form and foster. It found us reduced to barbaric industrial inaptitude, produced by political causes, and not by the natural character of our people.

But I must not delay you longer. I have been able only to touch the very skirts of a great subject ; but perhaps even this slight sketch may not be altogether without advantage. From the mistakes and errors of our ancestors we may learn wisdom. While we strive to destroy root and branch the noxious system whose fruits are misery and degradation, we may apply ourselves to heal the wounds that it has made ; we may apply ourselves, as you so usefully have done, to reconsider the relations that have grown up between class and class, and especially between landlord and tenant ; we may investigate the various means proposed for removing the obstacles I have described to our industrial development.

If, for instance, one of these obstacles was the separation of the Irish people from contact with centres of industry, what can be more important than to lessen the interval between our people and the marts of Lancashire and Yorkshire, and to make the access to the markets which industry has there created, cheap and easy ? and this would obviously be attained by the improvement of our railway system.

I cannot now repeat what I have said on this subject when I first brought it forward in Parliament, or in my report as a Railway Commissioner, but I may venture to express my unhesitating conviction that the reform I have proposed can be carried out without permanent pecuniary loss, and that of all measures for the improvement of Ireland, this is the one whose good effects will most per-

meate and filter through our whole social system. It will reach every class and every corner of the country. It will enhance the value of agricultural produce, and make manufacturing industry remunerative in districts which without this reform it could not reach.

However great and extensive may be the good effects of the national system of education on the humbler classes, far too little has as yet been done to make up for the exclusion of the mass of the Irish people from higher education, industrial or academical, and that little has not been done well. In Scotland, where the universities are in harmony with national feeling, every class shares their advantages. Look at the Third Report of the Commissioners on Scotch Education, and you will find among the university students in large numbers the sons of clothiers, stationers, butchers, bakers, blacksmiths, shoemakers, carpenters, masons, farm servants, labourers ; and, as the necessary result, you will find Scotchmen of humble extraction thriving and prosperous all over the world. If we want to compete with them, we must imitate their example.

Industrial and technical education we specially need, and the suggestion of the best manner of promoting it may properly come from you. The materials for this object are abundant. We have reports collected by our diplomatic agents of the systems that are in operation in every part of the world.

But still more precious and more pregnant lessons may be learned from the investigation we have pursued. It may in some degree tend to remove that tendency to despair of the future of Ireland, which paralyses the energies of so many that love her well. It may bring home to some among us the great truth that social law and consequently social order cannot reign without the support of moral law, and must fail when placed in opposition to it. It may impress on our consciences that distinction between things and persons, on which, as Coleridge says, all law, human and divine, is grounded, and yet which the last century universally, and even this too often, in speculations upon Irish prosperity, ignores. It may force upon us the conviction, that while *things* may be used as mere means to an end, *persons* cannot be rightly employed without directly or indirectly sharing in that end, or to apply this principle in eloquent words familiar probably to many among you—palaces, baronial castles, great halls, stately mansions do not make a nation. The nation in every country dwells in the cottage ; and unless the light of your constitution can shine there, unless the beauty of your legislation and the excellence of your statesmanship are impressed there on the feelings and condition of the people, rely upon it you have yet to learn the duties of government.

For discussion following this Address, see *Proceedings*, page 100.
