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ARRESTED PROGRESS.

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IN the controversies with which we are now so unhappily familiar, we are accustomed to phrases such as "the people of Ireland," "the condition of Ireland," and others of like import—phrases implying that the whole people of Ireland are to be regarded as one body, and that the condition of Ireland is uniform throughout. Neither of these implications is true, or even anything like the truth. Leaving the question as to the homogeneity of the "Irish people" to be dealt with for the present by politicians, it may be well to consider what is the truth about the condition of the country. Here, one very remarkable circumstance presents itself. The implication always is, not only that the condition of Ireland is uniform, but that it is a condition of uniform poverty. Now, nothing can very well be further from the truth than this. Ireland is even now very far from being a poor country. Ireland, four years ago, before this unhappy agitation began, was well on the way to become an actually rich country. Her progress in this career has been arrested for a time; but this arrest, which began from purely

natural causes, threatens to become a disastrous retrograde movement, under the pernicious influence of selfish counsels and false patriotism.

It is by no means unimportant to attain to correctness of view on this subject. The agitator possesses some of the sleight-of-hand of the thimblerrigger, and deftly rings the changes from complaints of poverty to tirades of sentiment. It is of the utmost importance, therefore, to follow him wherever he shifts his ground, and to beat him from one post after another. It is *not* true that the majority, or even that an important minority, of the Irish people is abjectly poor. Poverty exists in Ireland as it exists in every other community in the world. But it exists with this difference, that it is for the most part the sufferers' own fault. Emigration from over-populated districts would relieve the stress, and would benefit alike those who departed and those who remained. But emigration would destroy the trade of the agitator, and against emigration, accordingly, the agitator sets his face. The landlord who helps his tenants to leave the country is dubbed an exterminator. The tenants are sedulously taught to believe that they have a right to remain on the soil, whether the soil can maintain them or not. It is industriously instilled into their minds that they would prosper if they were *rooted in the soil*. It would be more true to say that the real way to make them prosper would be to make them independent of the soil as a means of livelihood.

Laying this part of the dispute aside for the present, we propose to bring forward some of the evidence which, in our opinion, goes to prove that Ireland is a country even now by no means poor, and one whose wealth, moreover, has shown a distinct tendency to increase.

It is generally admitted that one very important test of prosperity is the *capacity for accumulating capital*. Of this capacity the Bank deposits afford a very clear index, as has been pointed out by Dr. Neilson Hancock. From his Report on the Statistics of Savings in Ireland we take the following figures :—

1840, ...	£5,568,000	1861, ...	£15,005,000
1841, ...	6,023,000	1862, ...	14,389,000
1842, ...	6,417,000	1863, ...	12,967,000
1843, ...	6,966,000	1864, ...	15,623,000
1844, ...	7,601,000	1865, ...	18,619,000
1845, ...	8,031,000	1866, ...	20,957,000
1846, ...	8,442,000	1867, ...	21,794,000
1847, ...	6,493,000	1868, ...	22,164,000
1848, ...	7,071,000	1869, ...	22,673,000
1849, ...	7,470,000	1870, ...	24,366,000
1850, ...	8,269,000	1871, ...	26,049,000
1851, ...	8,263,000	1872, ...	27,214,000
1852, ...	10,773,000	1873, ...	28,194,000
1853, ...	10,915,000	1874, ...	29,859,000
1854, ...	11,666,000	1875, ...	31,815,000
1855, ...	12,286,000	1876, ...	32,815,000
1856, ...	13,753,000	1877, ...	32,746,000
1857, ...	13,113,000	1878, ...	31,745,000
1858, ...	15,131,000	1879, ...	30,191,000
1859, ...	16,042,000	1880, ...	29,350,000
1860, ...	15,609,000		

It is to be remarked that the years in this Table are to be taken as ending on 30th June; hence 1880 means 1st July, 1879, to 30th June, 1880.

From this it appears that the saving power of the Irish community is now more than fivefold greater than it was forty years ago. The decennial periods establish clearly a steady increase, which is practically unaffected by an occasional slight retrogression. Making every allowance for such brief intervals, the saving power of 1880 remains to that of 1840 as 29 to 5, and to that of 1850 as 29 to 8. It is a well known fact that by far the greater part of these deposits belong to tenant farmers.

According to Dr. Neilson Hancock, the fluctuations of Bank deposits vary with those of the harvests. If so, we are entitled to expect an increase in deposits commencing from the harvest of 1880. Should this not occur, especially if the harvest of 1881 turns out good, we can hardly escape the conclusion that agitation is injuring the saving power of the community.

It may be worth noting in this connexion that there is an increase in the investments in Government and India Stock, dating from 1879. In that year the investments exceeded those of 1879 by £1,228,000; and the investments of 1880 exceed those of 1879 by £76,000. Previous to 1879 there had been a gradual decrease in these investments.

In close connexion with this subject of the ac-

cumulation of capital stand the Railway Investments of the community, a valuable index of its condition as to wealth. The total capital* invested in Irish Railways in 1876 was £30,960,400. Of this fully half was then held by persons resident in Ireland. Irish Railway Securities ranked then in the markets of the United Kingdom next after the best English Securities of the same kind. Estimating the price of £4 per cent.† per annum in English Government Securities at £125, the Debenture Stock of the Great Northern and Western Railways (England) was priced at $104\frac{1}{2}$, in July 1876; the Debenture Stock of the Irish Great Southern and Western at 103, and that of the Great Northern of Ireland at $101\frac{1}{2}$. At present (November, 1880) Great Southern and Western Four per Cent. Debentures stand at 107, and Great Northern 106. These enhanced prices however must not be taken to indicate a public confidence increased in full proportion. They are mainly due to the present plethora of idle capital. Here a very remarkable fact demands to be recorded. It is said on the Dublin Stock Exchange that Railway Capital is just at present very largely passing out of the hands of private parties and into the possession of banking firms. It may be fairly surmised that this indicates a change of public confidence. Private

* *Thom's Directory.*

† *Thom's Directory*, quoting from Dr. Neilson Hancock's Tables.

holders seem to be intimidated, and to be awaiting with anxiety the results of the Land Agitation.

To conclude this portion of the subject, we find the gross capital of the country estimated by Dr. Neilson Hancock* in 1875 at £258,887,700 against £95,286,000 in 1846-50; or, as he otherwise puts it, the accumulated capital per head of population in 1846-50 was £12, while in 1876 it was £49. When we compare the populations the contrast becomes even stronger. In 1846, eight millions of people had less than ninety-six millions of capital. In 1876 five and a half millions of people had two hundred and fifty nine millions of capital.

Another generally admitted test of the prosperity of a community is *increase of trade*. Of this, in the case of maritime countries, an index is to be found in the shipping of the principal ports. To show what progress Ireland has made in this way, we take the following quotation from a paper read before the British Association, in 1878, by Mr. Bindon Stoney, Engineer of the Dublin Port and Docks Board:—

The trade of few harbours in the United Kingdom has made greater relative progress within the last twenty years than that of Dublin. This, no doubt, is mainly due to the increased prosperity of the country as a whole, but it may also be attributed in great measure to the convergence of the main lines of internal traffic to Dublin, which has thus naturally become more and more the mart and emporium for a great portion of Ireland. During this period of twenty years the tonnage entering the port has much more than doubled. In 1857 it amounted to 880,844 tons, and last year it rose to

* *Thom's Directory*, 1880.

1,973,781 tons, while during the current year there is a good promise that it will surpass the 2,000,000 limit. For the sake of comparison I have placed in a tabular form the tonnage of Liverpool and Glasgow, as well as those of the three principal ports in Ireland, for the three years preceding 1858 and 1878 respectively, so as to give fair averages of their respective rates of progress within the last twenty years.

From this table it will be observed that while the tonnages of Liverpool and Glasgow have respectively increased fifty per cent. in the last twenty years, those of Belfast and Cork have nearly doubled, and that of Dublin has considerably more than doubled in the same time. Also, the tonnage of Glasgow is only one-fourth more and that of Liverpool is not four times greater than that of Dublin.

	Liverpool (including Birkenhead)	Glasgow.	Dublin.	Belfast.	Cork.*
	Tons	Tons	Tons.	Tons	Tons
1855	4,096,160	1,666,518	882,719	744,364	328,658
1856	4,320,618	1,673,096	904,903	772,127	347,126
1857	4,645,362	1,612,681	880,844	796,968	384,167
Average of pre- ceding 3 years }	4,354,047	1,650,765	889,488	771,153	353,317
1875	6,588,731	2,249,857	1,677,543	1,434,754	623,463
1876	6,805,970	2,298,076	1,879,886	1,497,585	740,558
1877	7,000,726	2,428,616	1,973,781	1,566,752	740,201
Average of pre- ceding 3 years }	6,798,476	2,325,516	1,843,737	1,499,697	701,407

The increase in the tonnage of the Port of Dublin is not confined to one class of vessel alone ; for we find that while the coasting trade increased from 821,640 tons to 1,543,861 tons, or nearly doubled in the last twenty years, the oversea trade increased from 67,848 tons to 299,876 tons, or more than quadrupled in the same period.

These facts and figures speak for themselves. Along with them may be mentioned the well-

* The tonnage of Cork Harbour is exclusively of vessels calling for orders, mails, or passengers, and not loading or unloading cargo.

known fact that the principal English railways find it worth while to keep up depôts in Dublin. The London and North-Western, in particular, has spent immense sums in connecting its North Wall depôt with the three leading lines of railway, and has built a magnificent fleet of steamers for the cross-channel trade.

As a concurrent cause in the general improvement of the condition of the people we have to note the considerable *rise of prices* which has taken place. This subject has been amply discussed, as far as agricultural prices are concerned, in connexion with Griffith's Valuation. We make no apology for extracting from our pamphlet dealing with that question the tables showing how this matter has stood in the period that has elapsed since the valuation was made.

TABLE showing the Prices of AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE as fixed by the Valuation (Ireland) Act, 1852, and the prices for the year 1873, in Thirteen of the principal Market Towns in Ireland, with the increase of Prices per cent. between 1852 and 1873:—

	Year 1852	Year 1873	Increase
	Prices fixed by Tenement Valuation	Prices in Thirteen Principal Towns	per cent. between 1852 & 1873
	s. d.	s. d.	per cent.
WHEAT, per cwt. of 112 lbs.	7 6	12 0	60·0
OATS, " "	4 10	6 10	41·4
BARLEY, " "	5 6	8 6	54·5
FLAX, " "	49 0	66 7	35·9
BUTTER, " "	65 4	110 0	68·4
BEEF, " "	35 6	70 0	97·2
MUTTON, " "	41 0	74 0	80·5
PORK, " "	32 0	50 0	56·2

TABLE, showing the scale of prices of agricultural produce laid down in the Act of 1852 and the Bill of 1877 respectively, and the increase per cent. in the value of each species of produce.

PRODUCE			Act of 1852	Bill of 1877	Increase per cent. in scale of prices
			Price per cwt.	Price per cwt.	
			s. d.	s. d.	
WHEAT	...	...	7 6	10 0	33·3
OATS	...	...	4 10	7 8	58·6
BARLEY	...	...	5 6	8 4	51·5
FLAX	...	...	49 0	60 0	22·4
BUTTER	...	...	65 4	121 4	85·7
BEEF	...	...	35 6	70 0	97·2
MUTTON	...	...	41 0	74 8	82·1
PORK	...	...	32 0	51 4	60·4

The remarkable part of this change in prices is, that it has so largely affected those kinds of produce which are connected with pasture. One of the leading causes of the increased wealth of Ireland has been the abandonment of comparatively unprofitable tillage, and the adoption in its stead of the very profitable trade of rearing and dealing in live stock.

The Census Commissioners in 1841 ascertained the quantity of land in every farm in Ireland, and the number of horses and mules, asses, cattle, sheep, pigs and poultry on each holding in that year, and the returns published in their report afford a valuable basis for comparison. The Commissioners assumed an average rate per head for each description of live stock, the principal

figures of which are given in the annexed tabular form No. 1. The improvement in the quality of the stock, and the higher prices obtained by facility of access to a larger range of markets, have materially increased the actual value of the different descriptions of live stock since 1841.

The following tables will clearly show this increase in value. The figures are taken from *Thom's Directory* for 1880, page 688. For the purpose of comparison with the independent estimate of the Royal Dublin Society and Royal Agricultural Society,* we have eliminated the Census valuation of asses, goats and poultry, which we show in a separate column.

Table No. 1 gives the Census prices, according to which the estimates were made until 1871, and the prices of 1876 from the report of the joint Societies.

TABLE No. 1.

Description of Stock.	Prices 1841 to 1871, Census estimate	Prices given by Royal Dublin Society and Royal Agricultural Society of Ireland, for 1876.
Horses,	£8 0 0	£22
Horned Cattle,	6 10 0	£5 to £18
Sheep,	1 2 0	£1 10s. to £2 10s.
Pigs,	1 5 0	£2 10s. to £5

Table No. 2 shows the estimated value at Census prices, beginning from 1841.

* Letter in reply to the Vice-President of the Agricultural Society of France, 1878.

TABLE No. 2.

YEAR.	Total value of Horses, Cattle, Sheep and Pigs.	Total value of Asses, Goats and Poultry.
1841	£20,801,988	£303,820
1851	20,325,405	411,990
1861	32,930,204	504,181
1871	36,956,276	558,935

It is important to bear in mind that the Census Commissioners adhered in their estimate to the prices of 1841. Although we are unable to ascertain the actual prices of 1871, it is certain that a considerable advance had taken place.

Table No. 3 shows the actual number of Horses, Cattle, Sheep and Pigs in 1876, and their value estimated at the prices assumed by the Census Commissioners in 1841.

TABLE No. 3.

STOCK.	Number.	Total Value at Census estimate.
Horses	526,160	£4,209,280
Horned Cattle	4,113,693	26,739,004
Sheep	4,007,518	4,408,269
Pigs	1,424,143	1,780,178
Total	10,071,514	£37,136,731

Table No 4 shows the actual value of the same quantity of stock, existing in 1876, according to

the prices estimated by the Royal Dublin Society and Royal Agricultural Society of Ireland, given in their letter in reply to the Agricultural Society of France, published in 1878.

TABLE No. 4.

STOCK.	Number.	Value.
Horned Cattle, . . .	4,113,693	£52,880,277
Sheep,	4,007,518	8,590,101
Pigs,	1,424,143	4,050,062
Horses,	526,160	11,575,520
Total, . . .	10,071,514	£77,095,960

The increase in the value of live stock has another important aspect. We shall presently have to comment upon a considerable improvement in the wages of farm labour. This improvement, admitted by the farmers to exist, is sometimes complained of by them as neutralizing the rise of price and even making it harder to farm profitably than it used to be. But here it is to be noticed that in proportion as pasture increases relatively to tillage, the necessity for the employment of labour diminishes. A large grazing farm can be worked with fewer hands than a small tillage farm. So that not only is tillage ultimately unprofitable as compared to grazing, but the first cost of production is relatively greater for tillage than for grazing. These facts answer the complaint noted above, and explain the tendency of Irish tillage to diminish; a tendency which

agitators have no scruple in attributing to "extermination" on the part of landlords.

We may now proceed to examine the *condition of the ordinary farm labourers*, of whom there are 444,729 men with their families. The Royal Dublin Society and Royal Agricultural Society of Ireland, replying in 1878 to the Agricultural Society of France, assert that "prior to 1851 farm labourers could be hired for eightpence per day in summer and sixpence in winter." Occasionally the labourer of that day worked for his food only. The food itself was characteristic of the condition: a breakfast of *stirabout* (oatmeal porridge) and a dinner of potatoes. In 1876, just thirty years after the Famine, wages had risen to 1s. 6d. a day. In harvest 2s. 6d. to 3s. 6d. could be earned. Even since the agricultural depression that commenced in 1878, the fall has only brought down wages to 1s. 2d. or thereabouts.* Instances occurred in the early stages of the Land Agitation, where 1s. 6d. a day was offered and refused, while money from the various Relief Funds was being lavished in the localities. If a rise in the money wages of the lowest class of labour is a test of the condition of a people, the Irish are nearly three times as rich now as they were before the Famine.

A confirmation of these views may be quoted

* The Agricultural Society of Ireland, in their reply to the letter of the Vice-President of the Agricultural Society of France in 1878, estimate the wages of a farm labourer at 8s. per week, *i.e.*, 1s. 4d. a day.

here, coming from a somewhat unexpected quarter. The following is an extract from a letter which appeared in the *Irish Times* of November 24th. It purports to be a plea in behalf of the tenant, so it is above the suspicion of bias :—

“Before the potato disease” says the writer, “labour was cheap; men were grateful for employment, and gave value for their wages. Now they may make you submit to their own terms, for which they will return you half a day’s work. Forty years ago a farmer paid and supported a servant boy for about £8 a year, a servant girl in like proportion. Now a boy cannot be less to his employer than £24, and a servant girl £19. Their support and pay came all from the land formerly, for which they gave thanks with a fair day’s work. Now you must keep a grocery account open for them, that gives them tea twice a day, for which you receive not thanks, but impertinence.”

This is the testimony of an almost hostile witness; and it proves that in the letter writer’s opinion the condition of the labourers has certainly changed for the better. Oddly enough his figures give undesigned support to ours. “Forty years ago a boy cost £8, now he costs £24.” In other words, wages have risen three to one. But the same writer gives evidence that affects farmers as well. Here is the beginning of his letter—

SIR,—If the landlords have not come on the platform they are not slow in making use of the means the Press affords them to exhibit to the world their present disastrous condition. Their cry is now, “The tenants have lived in luxury in the years passed; their wives and daughters threw off the red petticoat, and have taken to themselves finer

garments. It is even said that the greater part of them drink tea, and it's even told that some of them forget their position so far as to eat American pork on Sundays. They squandered the rent that should be laid up for my lord's demands, and have nothing left for the "rainy day."

It is no part of our purpose to carry on a controversy with this writer; but it is open to us to point out that no one is blaming the tenantry, and except the writer himself no one is blaming the labourers for the improvement in the standard of living. It is surely fair to plead, when landlords are accused of keeping the people in poverty, that their style of living proves them not to be poor. The writer whose letter we are quoting does not deny the increased expenditure. We on our part do not deny that the people had a right to spend their money in that way, if they did so without prejudice to other and more important claims.

One more word of caution needs to be said. We do not assert that the condition of the labouring classes is absolutely good. Eight shillings a week is but indifferent pay. What we do assert is that an improvement had taken place, and that an upward tendency had set in. It is now notorious that the upward movement has been arrested; whatever the Agitation may boast of aiming at, in the way of bettering the condition of the small tenant, it is absolutely certain that it has inflicted a severe blow on the day labourer. Not that the Agitation has driven down wages;

but it has certainly rendered wages more difficult to be earned.

THE FACTS AND FIGURES contained in the above sketch speak sufficiently for the merely *material progress* of the past thirty years. It is no mere inference or vain imagination of ours that wages have risen nearly threefold—that prices varying from 22 to 97 per cent. better than those of 1852 can now be obtained for every article of Irish produce, while at the same time the produce has vastly increased in quantity—that the saving power of the community has increased fourfold, and the accumulated capital more than fourfold, and that Irish local securities fetch prices which bear a fair comparison with those of the best English securities of the same class.

Other evidence of improvement in the general condition of the country may be found in all manner of directions. For instance, in 1841 there were nearly half a million of windowless one-roomed cabins—491,278, inhabited by 625,356 families; or, at five persons to a family, there were 3,126,780 persons inhabiting these hovels. By 1871 the number of these huts had fallen to 155,675, and of their inhabitants to 227,379 families, including 1,152,000 souls. Of the next higher class of dwellings (mud cabins, but windowed, and having two to four rooms) there were in 1841 533,297, inhabited by 574,386 families (say, 2,871,930 souls). In 1871 the number of cabins

was reduced to 357,126, inhabited by 432,744 families, or 2,163,720 souls. But the houses classed second in the Census—the better class of farm-houses, and in towns those having five to nine rooms—rose in the same period from 264,184 to 387,660, the families inhabiting them being, in 1841, 241,664, and, in 1871, 357,752. In other words, the number of persons accommodated in the average middle-class dwelling-houses was greater in 1871 than in 1841 by 580,440, the numbers being 1,788,760 against 1,208,320. The increase in the first class of houses was from 40,080, with 31,333 families, to 60,909, with 49,693 families; so that the two better classes of houses exhibit a marked increase. This is important, as proving that the rise in the condition of the people was genuine, and not merely due to the clearing away of the poorer inhabitants.

THE EVIDENCE OF IMPROVEMENT is not less (though it is different in kind) when we come to matters less easily estimated by figures. *Educational progress* is not an affair of mere statistics, as are wages, and prices, and the annual amount of bank deposits. Nevertheless a striking increase in the number of schools, the attendance of pupils, and the expenditure on education, is a good collateral proof of an improving social condition. The following Table, taken from *Thom's Directory* for 1880, shews the figures relating to the schools under the

National Board, which constitute the principal portion of the Irish Primary School system :—

Year.	No. of Schools.	No. of Pupils.	Parliamentary Grant.
1841 . .	2,337	281,849	£50,000
1871 . .	6,914	972,906	408,388

In other words, according to the Census returns, the number of primary schools in thirty years had multiplied nearly threefold (2·95 to 1). The number of pupils had increased more than threefold (3·7 to 1), and the expenditure on primary education had increased in the ratio of 8 to 1. In 1871, the population being 5,412,377 and the number of National School children 972,906, they averaged over 17 per cent. of the whole; but the number of children in primary schools must be considered with reference, not to the whole population but to the farming and labouring classes. Putting the number of labourers' families (as we are justified in doing) at about 400,000, and the number of farmers likely to send children to primary schools at about the same, we have about 800,000 families, or four millions of persons from whom the school population would be drawn; so that, roughly speaking, one-fourth of the whole labouring and small farming population consisted of children in primary schools. We may here say, that for obvious reasons we chose the Census years 1841 and 1871 for our comparative table; but

the progress subsequent to 1871 was not less marked. The figures for 1878 (the latest return available) are as follow :—

Schools, 7,443; Pupils, 1,036,742; Parliamentary Grant, £659,837.

These figures prove that the spread of primary instruction was progressive up to a recent period.

The immense stimulus to Educational effort brought about by the *Intermediate Act* of 1878 is a social factor whose importance is universally felt. The Act having been only two years in operation, there are not the same sort of data for estimating progress which are afforded by institutions of longer standing. Nevertheless, the results are striking, so far as they have gone. The following Table shows the numbers of boys and girls who passed the Intermediate Examinations in the two years during which the system has been at work :—

Year.	Boys.	Girls.	Total of Pupils.
1879 . .	1,850	482	2,332
1880 . .	2,639	994	3,633

The increase in the number of boys who passed this very searching examination was nearly 43 per cent.; and the corresponding increase in the number of girls was very remarkable, being actually 106 per cent.

Thus, whether we look at Primary or Intermediate Instruction we find evidence of progress,

in the one case dating from a long way back, in the other recent, indeed, but of most encouraging promise. Whether the progress is to continue, and the promise to be kept, is one of the chief problems of our day. Insecurity of life and property seems hardly the way to ensure it; but our task is to record the past and not to forecast the future. We pass on to other considerations.

Among them we have to note a serious change in the position of the Schoolmaster, which is, in a great measure, the result of the Intermediate Act. The energy of teachers has developed itself to an almost incredible degree. The mere money value of teaching power has risen considerably. It may be said that in this respect Ireland is only following in the wake of England, where the position of Schoolmaster means affluence and dignity, and even that of usher is at least no longer synonymous with poverty and contempt. Granted; but all we here contend for is, that Ireland *is* in the way of progress; her intellectual as well as her material prosperity is advancing day by day, and is advancing under the same conditions as that of the rest of the Empire. If the existing laws of landed property have not hindered the accumulation of Irish capital, neither have they hindered the expansion of Irish intellect.

It may be thought that these latter considerations are irrelevant to the question of wealth or poverty. It is true that poor communities have

occasionally produced men of genius ; but it requires not only a certain amount but a certain diffusion of wealth to create an educated community. If, therefore, we find an intellectual stimulus pervading a great mass of the people, and at the same time we find an increase in the aggregate wealth of the country, we may safely accept the one as a collateral proof of the healthy distribution of the other.

THE CONCLUSION from all the facts we have set forth, seems to be that *Ireland is a country in which the career of improvement has made considerable advance*. Wealth is developing, not too slowly; and the distribution of wealth is going on, not perhaps to perfection, but on the whole in a fairly healthy fashion. All this progress we are called upon to interrupt and to revolutionize, and we want to know the reason why? To this question there are just three answers possible. One is, to assert that all the progress is fictitious, and, unless the land laws be revolutionized, is of no value. This answer we leave confidently to the judgment of those who have been sufficiently interested to read thus far. Another is that which might be given, for example, by the editor of the *Spectator*; who a year ago pronounced that he was weary of hearing that Ireland was growing rich, and wanted to hear that Ireland was growing contented. To those who reply in this way we rejoin, that if discontent is in itself a reason for revolution, no government is possible,

since under none is there no discontent. If discontent, when unreasonable, is a proper subject for disregard or repression, the fact that Ireland is growing rich is a proof that her discontent is unreasonable, and therefore is criminal when it ceases to be contemptible. Besides, the agitator always alleges that, as a matter of fact, the Irish people are poor, and that their poverty is the cause of their discontent. It is only when the poverty is disproved that he falls back on the argument founded on the existence of discontent of another kind. The third answer is, that the discontent is real and reasonable as regards a certain class—a class which is not reached by the increase and diffusion of wealth which has been recorded. To this the rejoinder is, that the class in question is a small one, that it was daily diminishing, and there was reason to hope that it would soon rise out of its low condition. It is hardly necessary to explain that we mean by the class in question the 117,580 so-called tenant-farmers whose holdings do not exceed five acres. Even of this class hardly more than half are anything more than day-labourers with a small allotment; but they constitute the class which affords whatever justification exists for the cry of poverty. It is not too much to say that an improvement in the condition of 100,000 families, or less than 500,000 persons, in whatever way it might be brought about, would go far to solve the Irish economic problem. At this point it is that the political economist is

compelled to ask why emigration cannot be brought to bear as a remedy for the alleged evils. In replying to this question the agitator has recourse to the device of shifting his ground from political economy to sentiment ; and here, for the present, we must decline to follow him. This much, however, may be said. If it be contended that every man, woman and child born on Irish soil has a right to remain there, the proposition is one which we are not concerned to dispute. What we do deny and protest against is the proposition, that those who, in despite of natural and economic laws, persist in remaining where they affirm that they cannot live, have a right to set up a claim antagonistic to the interest of the rest of the community. But the full expansion of this line of thought belongs to the department of politics, and not to that of political arithmetic.

Houses of the Oireachtas