

AN
A P P E A L
TO THE
WISDOM, JUSTICE, AND MERCY
OF THE
IMPERIAL PARLIAMENT,
IN BEHALF OF
THE IRISH PEASANTRY,
ON THE SUBJECT OF
A NATIONAL SYSTEM OF RAILWAYS
IN IRELAND,
BY
HENRY E. FLYNN.

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———“Defend the poor and the fatherless: see that such as are  
in need and necessity have right.”  
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"IRISH RAILWAYS."

AN APPEAL, &c.

TO THE BRITISH SENATE.

Dublin, May, 1839.

LEGISLATORS,

Except to the immediate Leaders and the *Fag* of political sections at both sides of the question, it matters but little what Party rules the State, provided a paternal Government be established.—The Poor of Ireland will be just as ready to receive *good* at the hands of one party as from those of another.

Irishmen may glory in their country, and be justly proud of the genius, the talents, and the attributes of the many illustrious worthies and exalted heroes to whom she has given birth ; but yet must they admit, that the mass of her peasantry and the greater portion of her provincial artizans are, although proverbially shrewd, far below zero in either mental acquirements or moral excellence. But why are they so ? is easily answered. Impoverished, destitute, and hitherto neglected and abandoned to wretchedness, they are without stimulus to emulation, and have been estranged from all sense of social obligation.

This position is established by the Irish Railway Commissioners' Report. But the statistics of the wages, the employment, and the consequent means of support of the Irish Peasantry, and the lower grades of Irish Artizans, as given in the first pages of that Report, are greatly defective.—Those Gentlemen have omitted the important facts, that the period of daily *labor* is ten and one-half hours—that the average wages

given, are but for *such* days out of the seven in the week, as they can find a precarious employment, and—that the general want of employment is such, that out of Twelve months of the year—

Leinster and Ulster conjointly do *not* afford Eleven months' work;

Leinster and Munster *not* Ten months' work; and—

Leinster and Connaught *not* Nine months' work.

Indeed the average for the four Provinces does not exceed *nine* months' work out of the twelve. And as the wages are for but six days out of seven, those wretched beings' means of daily support throughout the year, will, even according to the *high* average given by these Commissioners, be found to be—
for—

Leinster and Ulster about NINE pence!

Leinster and Munster *not* SIX pence!!

Leinster and Connaught *not* FOUR pence!!!

Making an average for the whole of Ireland of about six-pence per diem. Not, mark! taking into account any diminution for sickness, wet days, and other contingencies; which may reduce it to little more than the average for Leinster and Connaught; —FOUR PENCE!

Think of FOUR-PENCE a day even in times of plenty,—but what is it during periods of dearth?

Blessed with health, and strength, and nine months' continuous labor, the man, may with the aid of his wife, contrive to raise this average up to Six-pence—WRETCHED SIXPENCE!—On *Sixpence*, the husband, the wife, and generally three almost naked infants drag on a famishing existence. But if sickness should attack either of the parents,—utter misery and starvation overwhelm all!

Can a paternal Government witness this unmoved? *Are* Whigs or Tories so base as to let slip any opportunity for its melioration? *Will* the British Senate permit it to exist?

That such is really and without exaggeration the miserable state of the great mass of the Irish population is irrefragably proved by the Commissioners' Report. And if it be,—What sense of social ties can such beings possess? Thus abandoned

to misery they must, and do feel themselves outcasts, and aliens from all protective law. And being so,—What moral obligation have *such* wretches to maintain the relations of society?

Yet poor and wretched as are the Irish Peasantry, they are neither debased nor depraved; for it is admitted that they are warm-hearted, hospitable, generous and grateful. They have, indeed, the keenest sense of personal insult, and a chivalrous regard to the purity of their females; and if you look deeper than the *surface* it may be found, that it is from a wild desire to do themselves justice whenever these or other rights, real or imaginary, are violated or invaded that most of their vengeful crimes have birth. In these vengeful crimes they are reckless because they are wretched; wretched, because they are idle; and idle, only because they have not the means of continuous employment.

The advocates for the construction of Railways by private speculation may be bold enough to assert, that private speculation aided by public advances, will accomplish every legitimate object, and afford ample employment. This is just possible, but by no means probable. And as the soul of private speculation is *not* public but private gain, so it never yet did, nor never will embrace or accomplish remunerative employment, national improvement, or popular happiness.

Private speculations, and even Individual enterprise are valuable in themselves, and merit a steady and liberal encouragement; but the good which they effect is slow and stunted. And if they be clogged or hampered by even the least unfavourable provision in their 'act of incorporation,' not to speak of any plan for the melioration of the poor, their vitality is at once destroyed.

From their very nature, their operations must be limited to intervals, and confined to favorable localities; and even then they flag and wither unless upheld by official encouragement and the aid of public advances. The Dublin and Kingstown Railway never would have gone on but for public aid. And as to the Dublin and Drogheda Railway—This powerful Company though it has secured to itself a perfect monopoly of thirty miles of the most improvable, attractive, wealthy, rising, industrious, and populous district in Ireland;—One in which a Railway will prove

of great public advantage, and, if extended to Newry and Belfast, of great mercantile importance and national utility ;—And one, which will and must pay the Proprietors *treble* the amount which any other line of similar extent in Ireland can be hoped to produce ; yet by reason of a clause in their Act, not to *borrow* money until after the expenditure of some £2 or 300,000 ; and still more, because the Railway Commissioners have not reported directly favorable to its prospects, although they have *indirectly* done so ; and have, under a National System, almost bound the Government to extend the line to Newry at least ; still the Dublin and Drogheda Company, with a most respectable, wealthy, and influential body of both English and Irish Proprietors, and a line of country decidedly the best in Ireland for a Railway, stands paralysed, and must fall unless that aid to which it is justly entitled, be extended to it by Government.

Employment ; encouragement by continuous and remunerative employment, on an extensive and judicious system was never yet tried with the laboring classes of Ireland. No *national* attempt has ever been made to induce sober and industrious habits, to secure their personal comfort, or to raise them in the scale of moral elevation.—The construction of a general and comprehensive system of Railways throughout Ireland, affords an opportunity to accomplish ALL at this moment.

In the hands of Government, the machinery may be simple,—it will be effective.

1st.—Let the minimum of weekly wages be 10s. to be encreased in proportion to the quantity and quality of the individual's work.

Let a fifth of *all* wages be reserved, and allowed to accumulate at four per cent in the Saving's Bank for each individual, and not be payable until the completion of the work, or in case of death, or permanently leaving the employment.

Let the absent at hour, the inattentive, the disorderly and the drunken be fined proportionately to his week's offences ; and let the produce of these fines be allocated monthly to the sober, attentive, and deserving amongst the *class* from which the amount was levied.

Thus, by the time the works are completed, will be accumulated for each, such a sum as they never could otherwise collect.—In

case of death, it will be some provision for the widow and the orphan. At the completion of the works it will enable the artizans and their families to commence some little dealing, or to otherwise extend their wings; and it will enable the laborers to commence with a couple of cows, some pigs and a horse.

2nd.—The various lines of country to be traversed by the Railways, may be made to afford abundance of building materials for almost nothing; and the tract of country required for the Railway cannot,* or *need not*, be limited to the exact breadth merely necessary for double or treble lines of Rails;—This might be *made* to afford a sort of Commonage at each side of the road, whereon the labourers could between times, and during after hours, erect a vast number of cottages having, laterally with the Railway, a small cabbage, or potato plot to each.—A strip of ten to twelve feet would allow *half-a-rood* to each.

These Cottages might during the construction of the works be let to the workmen at a small rent; suppose—at what would be just sufficient to cover the cost of doors, windows, and slating. And so soon as each line shall be completed; let these cottages be by lot distributed as deed of *gift* to the most deserving of the labourers, and others employed on that line, to be held by them *during* good behaviour. The hope of possessing a comfortable dwelling for life so soon as the Railway should be completed, would prove not only an incentive to good conduct, but the most powerful stimulous to the rapid construction of the works. And, thus would be established and maintained, along each side of the several lines, an *unpaid* Police, whose proved industrious habits and fealty could be depended on; whose constant residence would be the best possible protection to the works; and whose immediate assistance could be made available on any accident or emergency.

Suppose the whole extent of Railways to be *four hundred miles*, and but *one* cottage to each furlong on either side of the lines. Here then would be at least SIX THOUSAND, FOUR HUNDRED POOR FAMILIES PROVIDED WITH COMFORTABLE HABITATIONS, AND HALF-A-ROOD OF GARDEN TO EACH WITHOUT COSTING THE COUNTRY ALMOST ANYTHING !

* Slopes of Cuttings and Embankments.

Here too, would be established a chain of communication ; by which intelligence could be conveyed from the Giant's Causeway to Cape Clear, and from Howth to Connemara in less than an hour !—Private speculation never did, nor never will, accomplish good like this.

The careless and the interested may say, that “ the detail of such a plan would be *troublesome*, and not *likely* to be engrafted on any Government scheme of action.” Pshaw ! It is the moral and physical improvement of a Nation ; the happiness of a People ; and one single individual can accomplish it. The Imperial Legislature can, by merely deciding *that it shall be so*, not only make it quite feasible, but extremely facile.

But, and if the Imperial Parliament cast aside the present opportunity of raising the Irish Peasantry in the scale of moral elevation ; and wrest from them this one, this single, this only hope of escape from perpetual wretchedness ; What attachment to British connection ;—What confidence in the wisdom, the justice, or the mercy of a British Senate ;—or, What devoted loyalty to a British Crown can be expected from a *caste* thus alienated, despised, and neglected ? You, Legislators, if you possess human intellect, and know the hearts of men, can answer.

With profound respect,

I have the honor to be,

&c. &c. &c.

HENRY E. FLYNN.