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CONSIDERATIONS ON THE STATE OF IRELAND.

Houses of the Oireachtas

AT



CONSIDERATIONS  
ON THE  
STATE OF IRELAND:

BEING  
AN ADDRESS

Delivered before the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland, at the opening of its Seventeenth Session, on Wednesday, November 18, 1863.

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1863.





# ADDRESS,

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THE Statistical Society of Dublin commenced its career in that most disastrous period of the recent history of Ireland—the famine year of 1847. It was the pressure of the social problems then imperatively demanding attention, that led its youthful founder to attempt the establishment of such an institution. He thought that by bringing together earnest-minded Irishmen to discuss these problems in a calm and scientific spirit, he would contribute something towards their satisfactory solution. The gravity of the circumstances which attended the birth and early history of our Society, has given to its proceedings throughout its whole existence, a peculiarly real and vital character. It has not occupied itself with dilettante statistics, collected with no special purpose, and tending to no definite conclusion. It has from the first applied itself, in the spirit of earnest inquiry, to the most important questions affecting the condition of the country; and the increasing accession of intelligent Irishmen to its ranks, indicates their belief that it has not laboured in vain.

Called by the desire of your Council to address you at the opening of a new session, and thus led to consider more closely the condition of Ireland, I could not but be impressed by the grave character of the crisis. When the task was proposed to me, the country was still labouring under the severest pressure she had experienced since 1847. The gloom has now, indeed, in a great measure dispersed, and we see before us a brightening prospect. But the recollection of those recent trials, and the idea of their possible recurrence, must still strongly impress every thoughtful mind. I have felt that, at such a time, I could not seek to engage your attention with any mere generalities of social science. It seemed to me that I should best imitate the antecedents of the Society, and best reflect the earnest character of its discussions, if I addressed myself to some of the important questions arising out of the condition of the country. I proceed, therefore, to lay before you a few plain and practical considerations on the present economic circumstances of Ireland, and the measures which appear necessary to ensure her future prosperity.

It is natural that we should first direct our view to the remarkable spectacle of the emigration which is removing so many of our fellow-countrymen to other lands.



This great movement, though its dimensions cannot fail strongly to impress the imagination, we can yet see to be a perfectly natural consequence of economic laws acting under the new conditions of human societies. If in former times the Irish peasant squatted from year to year on his poor little patch of land, or toiled on for miserable wages in a state of chronic semi-starvation, when in other countries he and his children might have earned, with no greater effort, a comfortable livelihood, it was not because he wished to remain, but because he was unable to go. Often speaking only the Irish language, and without any distinct notion either of the geographical situation, or of the industrial condition of other countries, he was, in the strictest sense of the words, *adscriptus glebæ*. And, even if he had learned English, and was otherwise fitted to take his place in a new social medium, how was he from his scanty resources to pay the expense of the passage, then no inconsiderable amount?

The two agencies which have set him free are the diffusion of knowledge by the National System of Education, and the reduction of the passage money to America and Australia, by the immense recent development of trade and intercourse between different countries. First of all, in the national schools he learned English. The number of Irishmen who could speak only Irish was estimated in 1822 at two millions; in 1861 it was less than 164,000. Here was one obstacle removed—the same that still, as we are told by Sir John McNeill, makes it impossible to apply the obvious remedy to the over population of the island of Skye. The Irish farming and labouring classes became generally better informed and more intelligent; they understood more distinctly the facilities for obtaining land in the United States, and the high rate of wages that prevailed there, and they were better able to avail themselves of those advantages. The old narrowness of view, timidity, and want of enterprise rapidly disappeared, and large numbers of the people desired to try their chances in a new country. While their fitness for emigration was thus increasing, and their wish for it becoming strong, the wonderful increase of trade and communication between different nations stimulated the arts of shipbuilding and navigation; and the cost of the passage to America and Australia gradually fell. Then the influence of the natural law—sure in its action as that under which water finds its level—began to be felt; and the Irish labouring classes began to pour in a continuous stream from a country where wages were low, and it was not easy to live, to countries where wages were high, and no one need want who was able and willing to work.

The cheapness and abundance of the potato had alone enabled the Irish working classes to exist on the wretched wages which prevailed before 1846. Its failure, therefore, accelerated the emigration which was already in progress. Liberal contributions were sent over from America in the period of the greatest distress, and it is worthy of observation that these contributions came in the form, not of money, but of food. Nothing could more strongly affect the imagination of a starving people than the large supplies of wheat and Indian corn which then arrived from the United States. They placed



in the strongest contrast the abundance of America with the destitution of Ireland, and irresistibly attracted the labourer from a scene of penury to a land of plenty.

Neither the emigration itself nor its remarkable increase is a phenomenon peculiar to Ireland. It appears from the interesting work of M. Duval ("Histoire de l'Emigration"), that almost all the countries of western Europe have increasingly participated in the movement since the peace of 1815. Thus, for example, the number of emigrants from Germany, in the period between the years 1819 and 1826, did not exceed from 2,000 to 4,000 a-year. In 1851 the number had risen to 112,547, in 1853 to 162,568, and in 1854 to 251,931. These numbers, indeed, have not been maintained since then. But in 1855 there were 81,698 emigrants, and in 1856, 98,573; and now the average is from 50,000 to 60,000 per annum.

But it is still more important for us to bear in mind that from England and Scotland, as well as Ireland, this movement is in progress. It appears from the report of the English Census Commissioners of 1861 that 640,316 English, and 102,954 Scotch, emigrated from the United Kingdom in the ten years between 1851 and 1861, which gives an annual average of more than 74,000 for Great Britain during that period.

The same causes which brought about the emigration to America and the British colonies had still earlier produced a large migration to England and Scotland. About 230,000 went to reside there in the ten years before 1841; from 1841 to 1851, about 400,000; and from 1851 to 1861, about 300,000. The number of persons born in Ireland and residing in England and Scotland was ascertained in the census of 1861 to be upwards of 800,000. If we add to these their children and the living descendants of all who had emigrated since 1841, the aggregate will not be less than 2,300,000; and we shall arrive at the remarkable result that, notwithstanding the emigration that has been in progress in the interval, the total number of persons of Irish descent in the United Kingdom, in 1861, was as great as it had been twenty years before.

It is plainly impossible to stop either the migration to England and Scotland, or the emigration to America and Australia. With wages in England and Scotland at two shillings a-day, and the cost of a deck passage to Liverpool or Glasgow from four to five shillings, the migration will inevitably go on. With wages in New York at four shillings and upwards, and the cost of the passage not more than from five to six guineas, the emigration will inevitably go on.

Nothing can show more plainly how natural and spontaneous the movement is, than the results of the starting of the Atlantic steamers from Galway. The persons who were zealous for the success of that enterprise regarded it as likely to do something towards enriching Ireland, and so improving the condition of the population *at home*. But wherever the vent is opened, the people begin to stream out through it, and the astonished *Times* complains that the most important branch of trade which the establishment of the packet station has developed is the export of Irishmen.



Every one that goes makes it easier for others to follow. The members of a family who are left behind feel the difficulties of emigration to be greatly diminished, when they have relations already settled and thriving in the new country. In joining them, they will more easily find the employment that suits them, and they will sooner feel themselves at home in the new social element. The cheerful letters they receive from those who have preceded them rouse or strengthen the desire to go, and the warm-hearted brother or sister sends home money to assist in paying the passage, or in procuring the humble outfit necessary for the voyage. We are all familiar with the story of the remittances which the Irish emigrants, with a noble and touching self-forgetfulness, have sent to their relations in the old country—remittances which, in the single year 1853, amounted to nearly a million and a-half. These gifts, arriving from time to time, have a double effect: they supply the most convincing evidence of the prosperity of those who have gone before, and they facilitate the movements of those who wish to follow.

And here let me remark that, though I have stated the question as one of wages alone, and though the simple difference of wages would in the end produce the entire effects we observe and are destined yet to observe, there are other considerations which ought not to be left out of sight. Besides the desire of material prosperity, there is also in the hearts of many of our people a spirit of ambition, which at home, sometimes rather engenders discontent than stimulates exertion. The aspiring Irishman must observe with interest, that the absence of an aristocracy in America and the British colonies leaves far more open than in our older community the avenues to the highest distinctions of the State. In the great republic, Irish blood did not prevent a Jackson from rising to the presidential chair; and men on whom the ban of law had been pronounced at home, in Australia and Canada have been ministers of the crown.

But, it may be said, wages are rising, and this rise will put a speedy end to the emigration. This opinion I cannot adopt. So long as the rise does not approach very nearly to equalisation with the American rate, I think the effect of it will be rather to stimulate than to slacken the movement. It is true, the temptation will be less; but on the other hand, the facility will be greater. As the earnings of the working classes are larger, the cost of the passage will bear a smaller proportion to the resources of the labourer, and it will therefore be easier for him to accumulate the necessary sum. We cannot expect our harvests to be uniformly good; and when the labourer is better off, as America will be to him more accessible, he will be less patient of any reverse. While wages are actually rising, he will perhaps be disposed to remain; but the first slight turn in the fortunes of the country and the first temporary decline in wages thence arising will set the emigration going more rapidly than now.

Consider, besides, if the terrible struggle now raging in the United States were once at an end, how soon its material effects would be



obliterated ; with what a bound those states would again rush forward on the career of industry ! Look, too, at the magnificent future of industrial progress which is opening before our Canadian and Australian colonies. Is there not every prospect of a continued, nay, an increasing demand for labour ? And where, in the presence of these facts, is the probability of the emigration being speedily stayed ?

One thing alone will stop the migration to England and Scotland—the equalisation of wages here with wages beyond the channel. One thing alone will stop the emigration to America—the equalisation of wages here with wages beyond the Atlantic.

It is something gained towards a rational view of the emigration, to understand that it is quite independent of the volitions of landlords or of governments—a natural effect of natural causes ; and that, therefore, to lament it will be no more effectual than to lament the flowing of the tide. But I say further, that we cannot reasonably regard it with anything but satisfaction. For those who go, it means comparative ease and comfort, as is sufficiently proved by the cheerful letters and the generous remittances of which I have already spoken. For those who remain, it means higher wages and more continuous employment. I think those persons who honestly deplore the emigration do so under the influence of a very common illusion, arising from the softening effect produced by distance in social retrospect as in a physical landscape. While intensely alive to the immediate material inconvenience and moral pain which the emigrants feel in leaving their homes, they forget the far worse miseries which lie but a little way behind us in our national history. They forget the terrible picture of chronic destitution given by the Commissioners of 1834, and repeated, without any alleviation of its gloomy tints, by the Devon Commission of 1845. They forget the 83 per cent. of our rural population who in 1841 were found dwelling in wretched cabins unfit for human habitations.\* Nay, surely they forget the awful crisis of the famine itself, when they cannot estimate the consequences which our three late disastrous seasons would have produced had the emigration since 1847 not taken place.

It is well ascertained that wages in Ireland have considerably risen. From a paper by Mr. Frederick Purdy, Principal of the Statistical Department of the Poor Law Board in England, communicated to the Statistical Society of London in April, 1862, it appears that the advance in the wages of men for the whole of Ireland between 1843-4, and 1860, was equal to more than 57 per cent.—the highest rise, amounting to 87 per cent. having taken place in the province of Connaught, where at the earlier date the rate had been lowest. It seems highly probable that official figures do not exhibit the full amount of the rise in wages, for they are necessarily taken

\* Viz. 43·5 per cent. “living in the lowest state, being possessed of accommodation equivalent to the cabin, consisting but of a single room ;” and an additional 40 per cent. “but little removed in comfort.” The houses of both classes were generally “built of mud.”—*Report of Irish Census Commissioners for 1841.*



somewhat mechanically by the method of numerical average. But experienced and sagacious persons in country districts tell us that the time once was when the very best labour could in many localities be obtained at from 6d. to 8d. a-day ; that since then great numbers of the stalwart and active young men have left the country ; that the work is done by older and comparatively feeble hands ; and that the class now earning a shilling a-day really represents those who used to obtain little or no employment. The advance in wages will probably go on with accelerated rapidity, as the present old generation of labourers dies out in process of time.

Whilst I must dissent from those who deplore the emigration as a national calamity, I am equally unable to agree with some who imagine that if it proceed as it is doing, it will be sufficient of itself to remedy all the evils of Ireland. Over-population, they tell us, was the one disease she laboured under ; this will be removed by the depletion (as they call it) of the body politic which is now in progress ; and, without any change in our social institutions, the country will hereafter steadily advance. The persons who hold this language seem to me to overlook certain other very important effects of the same causes which have brought about the emigration itself.

The extraordinary increase of communication between different parts of the world, which has made so large an emigration possible, is leading to the further result of a far more intense competition between the agricultural products of different countries. The corn and flax that are grown in our fields must compete with imported produce ; the stock that is reared on our farms, with the cattle of continental Europe and the provision stores of America. In the first six months of 1862, the number of sheep and lambs imported from abroad into the United Kingdom was 49,332 ; in the corresponding period of 1863, it was 110,636 ; being an increase of more than 100 per cent. Again, of oxen, bulls, and cows the number imported from abroad was in the first six months of 1862, 11,462 ; whilst in those of 1863, it was 24,108 ; showing a similar increase. In bacon and hams the increase was from 821,960 cwt. in 1862, to 1,308,199 in 1863.\* One of the most interesting incidents of the late meeting of the Social Science Association in Edinburgh was the working men's supper, at which Montevideo beef was for the first time introduced to the notice of the public, and since then both at Limerick and in our own city attention has been called to this article of food. Great numbers of the cattle of Uruguay have been hitherto slaughtered merely for their hoofs, horns, and hides, the flesh going absolutely to waste ; for the future the meat, slightly salted and dried, is to be sent to

\* From the latest returns it appears that in the nine months ending 30th September, 1862, there were imported of

Sheep and lambs	...	...	158,669 ;
Oxen, bulls, and cows	...	...	34,803 ;
Bacon and hams	...	cwt.	1,141,171 ;
whilst, in the corresponding months of 1863, there were imported—			
Sheep and lambs	...	...	268,790 ;
Oxen, bulls, and cows	...	...	58,297 ;
Bacon and hams	...	cwt.	1,671,938.



the United Kingdom, and can be sold in the English market for 3d. or 3½d. per pound. In wool, flax, butter, and every other article of agricultural produce, a far keener and more extended competition may for the future be looked for, than has hitherto existed. Hence arises the following difficulty for the farming and landed interests : There is a rising rate of wages in Ireland, which increases the cost of production of home commodities ; concurrently with this, there is an intense and growing competition on the part of foreign producers, which will more and more have the effect of limiting the rise of prices. How are the agricultural classes to meet the grave crisis arising out of these new economic conditions ?

What resources they have, we shall best discover by considering, successively, the three instruments of production. First, as to labour : the rise of wages is sure to improve its application and promote its economy ; the utmost that can be made of it will be made ; and it will, when possible, be assisted by the use of machinery. Secondly, as to capital : it has sometimes been supposed that the farmers of Ireland do not possess the capital necessary to be expended on the proper improvement of their holdings. But this notion is completely dispelled by the statistics of the deposits in the Irish joint-stock banks. It is not disputed that the greater part the sum thus deposited is the property of the farming classes. Now the aggregate of the deposits amounted at the close of the year 1859 to upwards of sixteen millions sterling. It has, of course, since declined, and is now probably less than fourteen millions. But the country, under the influence of one bountiful harvest, is beginning to recover from the effects of three bad seasons ; and the amount of the deposits will, no doubt, ere long increase to its former level. This money is lent to the banks at an average of 2 per cent. to be employed either in our large towns or in England ; and is available to assist the improved system of Irish production, which the growing competition will imperatively demand.

Coming now to the third instrument of production, the land, it is essential to consider whether the conditions under which the capital and labour of the country can be applied to it are in a satisfactory state. Now, some of the leading members of our Society have, ever since its foundation, devoted special study to this question, and it is plainly the result of their researches, that notwithstanding the important changes which have been made in the laws relating to land, they do not yet fulfil the requirements of economic science.

The purpose of my present argument is to show that the emigration has not, as some persons imagine, put an end to the land question ; but that, on the contrary, the very same causes which have led to the emigration will force it on public attention with redoubled urgency. Recollect the circumstances under which the industry of the country will go on : intense competition, limiting a rise in prices, and an increasing rate of wages, steadily raising the cost of production. The burden of loss cannot now, as under the reign of monopoly, be transferred to the shoulders of the consumer. If agriculture be unsuccessful, the farmer himself will first suffer, and next the landlord. But the depression will not be confined to them ; it



will ultimately be shared by all classes of the community, bound up as their interests are with those of the farmer in a country like ours, almost entirely depending on agriculture.

All past experience proves that the climate of Ireland is in a high degree variable; we have had one good season, but who can tell how many unfavorable ones are destined to recur? Abundant harvests may temporarily palliate the effects of the causes I have described; but the next turn of the seasons will bring out the latent forces, and will press upon the agricultural classes with an intensity of which, up to the present, we have had no experience.

The prospects of Ireland must in the main depend upon the success of her agricultural industry; and for this, an adaptation of the laws affecting land to the new economic conditions of production is absolutely necessary. Giving up tillage will not meet the difficulty; for the competition affects the provision trade as well as the immediate products of the soil; and English cattle farmers have discovered that herds and flocks cannot take care of themselves, but that for their proper tending and feeding a large amount of human labour is necessary. In order that the Irish farmer may be able to sustain himself amidst the increasing competition, all that social arrangements can do to aid him must be done. As any nation that wishes to maintain its position must provide against the possibility of warfare by possessing the most improved military weapons—the Minie rifle and the Armstrong gun; as, in the competition of manufacturing industry, the country that does not wish to lag behind its fellows must adopt without delay all the latest improvements in machinery: so it will not do for Ireland, in the race of agricultural competition, to be impeded by any imperfections in the security of capital employed in agricultural improvement. The question is not now whether a particular arrangement is tolerable or not, but whether, for the future, successful competition will be possible, with all the disadvantages of Irish climate, with any but the *best* arrangements that social science can devise for the application of capital to agriculture. It is vain to assert that the land question is settled; the most thoughtful men in the country, and those who have most deeply studied its economic condition insist, and are able to prove, that it is *not* settled; men, I will add, whose conclusions on other questions relating to Ireland the public opinion of the empire has decisively approved.

But, it may be asked, why should this question be peculiarly Irish? Must not the economic conditions, already adverted to, affect the other portions of the United Kingdom? Undoubtedly, I reply, they are coming into operation there as well as here. The influx of the English agricultural labourers into the large towns, is a phenomenon quite similar to the Irish migration to England and Scotland. There is, besides, a large emigration going on from the rural districts of Great Britain. The rapid introduction of agricultural machinery is an index of the rise of wages, and the consequent growing necessity of economising labour. On the other hand, as we have seen, the force of foreign competition is beginning to be felt—foreign products are flowing steadily into the markets, and prices



are effectually prevented from following the rise of wages. The action of these causes has been hitherto in a great degree obscured by the abundance of other resources which are wanting in Ireland, by the great mineral wealth of the country, and by the continual demand for land for the purposes of manufacturing enterprise. But various indications lead us to believe that before long the economic crisis common, though in different degrees, to the two countries, will bring up the land question there, as well as here, with irresistible urgency.

The local customs favouring agriculture, and the good understanding between landlord and tenant, which sufficed heretofore, are not considered to afford a sufficient security under the new circumstances of production. In the esteemed treatise on Modern Agricultural Improvements, published as an appendix to the "British Husbandry" of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, you will find forcible expression of the growing opinion of English farmers, that a more positive and better defined security is necessary for their success. The same feeling is strongly exhibited in letters which have quite recently appeared in the *Times*. Within the last few days, a Practical Farmer, writing in that journal, says: "The question of a tenant's security for the outlay of his capital on his landlord's property, is second in importance to none; landlord and tenant are alike interested in its settlement on just terms; and on it hinges all future improvement of the soil of England. \* \* \*

The greatest portion of England always will be farmed by tenants; to farm badly at present prices is ruinous; to farm well, which the spirit of the times demands, is to run a risk. It is running a risk to trust to any man's honour not to turn you out, because the owner of the land may die, and another Pharaoh may reign who knew not Joseph. To run a risk is not only foolish; but, where a man is risking the money on which his family are dependent, it is wrong." When words like these begin to appear in the English journals, it is plain enough that propositions like those already brought forward by Mr. Pusey, will make their appearance again, and will not be disposed of so easily as before. The land question ought to be settled in Ireland first, because it is more pressing in a country almost entirely agricultural; but, in any case, it cannot be long postponed; for England also is feeling the necessity of improved arrangements, and the requirements of both countries will have to be met by comprehensive and impartial legislation.

Many Irish proprietors, desirous of assimilating the agricultural economy of Ireland to that of England, have endeavoured to effect a consolidation of the smaller holdings. A tendency in that direction is, indeed, the inevitable result of the social circumstances to which I have been calling your attention, namely, the diminution of our population and the rise of wages. Great difficulty, however, has been experienced in effecting the transition, and this difficulty is commonly attributed to the perverse character of the Irish people. "Why," it is asked, "do these small farmers cling with such desperate tenacity to the holdings they cannot properly cultivate, instead of peaceably resigning them, and becoming farm labourers like the corresponding class in England?"

Now, in these attempts to conform the Irish system of land



management to the English model, one essential circumstance has been generally overlooked, namely, the intimate connexion between the land system of England and the English Poor-law.

The English labourer is contented with his situation, not only because his wages are good, and his employment in general constant, but because he knows that if he should be overtaken by calamity, he will be liberally assisted until the crisis has past away. His home will not be broken up, his aged parents, his wife and his children will not be forced to enter the workhouse, but he and those who depend on him will be relieved at his own dwelling. This is the course which humanity recommends as due to those who suffer from causes which are beyond their own control, and against which they cannot be expected adequately to provide. It is peculiarly difficult for agricultural labourers to make provision against industrial crises or private calamity. From their dispersion over the country they find it impossible to set on foot and maintain the provident societies and other organisations for mutual assistance, which are more easily established where labour is concentrated. Common sense dictates that, if temporary relief is to be given, it should be given in such a way as to be most effectual for its purpose, and to disturb as little as possible the domestic life of the labourer. And this is precisely what is effected by the outdoor relief, which protects the English working classes in seasons of emergency from the bitterest consequences of distress, and tranquillises their minds at all times by the guarantees it affords them against the inevitable vicissitudes of their condition.

Now observe the difference between this state of things and that which exists in Ireland. In this country it is contrary to law to give outdoor relief to any able-bodied man, unless the workhouse be full, or severe infectious disease prevail in it. And the guardians of the poor and the Central Board are deprived by statute of the power of relaxing the prohibition, no matter what may be the hardship of any individual case or class of cases.

While this difference in the law of the two countries continues to exist, the English system of land management cannot be introduced into Ireland without producing grave discontent, and provoking determined resistance. The small farmer has clung to his little holding, because when employment is not continuous, he is not safe against the workhouse without the possession of a patch of land. He cannot be induced peaceably to let go his hold of it, and trust himself to the life of a labourer, unless, when he has thus altered his condition, he be protected against what is to him the worst result of temporary distress. Even when wages are higher, and work more regular than now, he will require to be secured against bad seasons and the consequent fluctuations of employment, whether general or local. If the Irish labourer be placed in the same position as the Englishman, with respect to public relief, our peasant farmers and cottiers will, with far less difficulty, be induced to resign the holdings which they cannot cultivate properly; and the inevitable process of consolidation will go on with less detriment to the interests of the poor, and less danger to the peace of the community. If the difference in the law be maintained, then, I say, either the



notion of introducing the English system of land management will have to be abandoned, and another, perhaps more conformable to the Continental model, will have to be introduced in its stead ; or, should the effort to multiply the large farms be continued, it will produce general popular discontent and social disorganisation.

One of the greatest evils of Ireland is the disaffection to the government which undeniably exists, and it is our duty to do every thing in our power to correct this state of feeling, by removing all just causes of complaint. Now I have no wish to depreciate the value to the lower classes of what are properly called political reforms ; in their direct, and still more in their remote results, they often powerfully affect the interests of the poor. But this at least cannot be denied, that questions of a strictly *social* kind affect them far more nearly, and come more home to their business and their bosoms. And I cannot imagine anything possessing more real and vital interest for a labouring man than the answer to the questions, What is to befall him in case of temporary pressure for want of work ? What is to be the lot of his widow in the event of his untimely death ? What will be the condition of his orphans ; what will be their prospects of material subsistence, and to what moral and religious influences will their young minds be exposed, when deprived at once of the means of support and of a father's control and guardianship ?

What, then, must be the feelings of the Irish working man, when he ascertains that in relation to every one of these questions, the law deals much more liberally with the English labourer than with himself ? Those of my hearers who have followed the discussions of this Society do not need to be informed that such is in fact the case.

Every destitute person in England has a legal right to relief on submitting to the prescribed tests. In Ireland no such right exists ; the guardians are the sole judges whether a person is destitute, and from their decision there is no appeal.

In England, as we have seen, the able-bodied can obtain relief out of the workhouse at the discretion of the Central Board and the guardians, under certain equitable conditions, intended to prevent abuse. In Ireland, outdoor relief to the able-bodied is absolutely prohibited by law.

In England, able-bodied women may obtain outdoor relief at the discretion of the Central Board and the guardians. In Ireland it is forbidden by law to extend such relief to any except widows ; and even in their case there is an arbitrary restriction to those having two or more children.

In England, children and young persons can be relieved out of the workhouse without distinction of age. In Ireland, by an act of the session of 1862, children under five years of age, if orphan or destitute, can be put to nurse out of the workhouse at the discretion of the guardians, but after that age they must be brought into the workhouse, or the relief is discontinued.

Now, in the face of these facts, there is an end to the pretence that the Irish and English poor live under the same laws ; and it is the height of absurdity to expect from the one the same loyal attachment to the government, which may reasonably be expected from the other.



The difference between the two systems will, perhaps, be most distinctly conceived when we consider the the following numerical comparisons.

On the first of January, 1863, there were relieved in England 1,142,000 persons, or 5·7 per cent. of the population. In Ireland on the same day, there were relieved 66,000 persons, or 1·1 per cent. of the population. The amount of relief given in England was therefore relatively more than 5 times greater than that given in Ireland. Next, as to the mode of its administration—of the 1,142,000 persons relieved in England on the day above-mentioned, 88 per cent. received that relief out of the workhouse, and 12 per cent. within it. Of the 66,000 persons relieved in Ireland, 9 per cent. were relieved out of the workhouse, and 91 per cent. within. It is surely no wonder that M. de Beaumont is amazed at the contrast between the two countries represented by such numbers.\*

Let it not be supposed that the Irish peasant is ignorant of the facts to which I have been calling your attention. There is, as I showed you before, a great and growing intercourse between the several parts of the United Kingdom. Few poor Irish families are without relatives and friends settled in England. Many of our people spend part of their lives in one country, and part in the other. An army of Irish labourers goes over annually to assist in the work of the harvest. They cannot be unaware of circumstances open to observation, and deeply affecting the condition of the poor; and they must be struck by the inferiority of their own position at home to that of the English labourer. They naturally ascribe this difference to the government; they are confirmed in the belief that the law is their enemy, and they are thus made an easier prey to unprincipled agitators.

I say, then, that the Irish and English Poor-law ought to be perfectly assimilated. Some years ago this proposition could scarcely have been made with any prospect of success. There was then a general, and I will admit, a not unreasonable timidity about adopting the system of outdoor relief. After the terrible experience of the period which immediately followed the famine, it was natural that the effort should be to make the provisions of the Poor-law as stringent as possible. But there has been since then an entire change in the conditions of the case. The emigration has greatly reduced the population, the poor rates have fallen to a very low amount, wages are rising, and the time seems to have arrived when the law in this country should be made identical with that of Eng-

\* The correctness of these statements has been denied by a writer in the *Globe*, (November 23, 1863). He says:—"The principle of the present English Poor Law is to afford relief to the able-bodied in the workhouse, and not otherwise. The adoption of that principle, after years of inquiry, and volumes of debate, by the legislature, was the greatest social revolution ever effected by any act of parliament, and we quite wonder that Professor Ingram has not heard of it. He has apparently gained his wrong notions of the English Poor Law from its main principle being at this time in temporary abeyance in Lancashire on account of the cotton famine. He has mistaken the exception for the rule. In the agricultural districts of England, which afford the true parallel to the case of Ireland, out-door relief to the able-bodied is at this time absolutely prohibited, except in a very few exceptional cases, and in the still fewer cases reported by boards of guardians to the Poor Law Board for its express sanction."



land. The legislature will then be free from responsibility in the matter, and it will remain for the guardians in each district to administer, under the same regulations as in England, their own rates according to their own discretion.

The conclusion at which I arrive is, that two measures are now essential to the well-being of the country : first, a thorough adjustment of the laws relating to land, to the new conditions of produc-

I find, however, in the last report of the English Poor Law Board, for 1862-3 (presented to Parliament in the session of 1863), the following table, giving the numbers of the able-bodied relieved in England and Wales on the 1st of July, 1862 :—

DIVISIONS.	ABLE-BODIED.		
	Male.	Female.	Children under 16.
1. THE METROPOLIS.			
In ... ..	1,123	2,504	3,213
Out ... ..	2,486	10,594	24,911
2. SOUTH EASTERN.			
In ... ..	545	1,507	1,843
Out ... ..	3,928	9,756	22,367
3. SOUTH MIDLAND.			
In ... ..	305	789	1,091
Out ... ..	3,404	8,505	18,145
4. EASTERN.			
In ... ..	457	1,169	1,574
Out ... ..	3,594	7,961	17,919
5. SOUTH WESTERN.			
In ... ..	167	1,199	1,735
Out ... ..	2,942	8,717	19,382
6. WEST MIDLAND.			
In ... ..	572	1,647	1,829
Out ... ..	3,096	9,971	24,469
7. NORTH MIDLAND.			
In ... ..	220	717	1,057
Out ... ..	1,945	5,538	13,595
8. NORTH WESTERN.			
In ... ..	816	2,098	1,874
Out ... ..	10,933	22,927	52,371
9. YORKSHIRE.			
In ... ..	284	645	889
Out ... ..	1,751	6,980	18,068
10. NORTHERN.			
In ... ..	115	518	654
Out ... ..	1,094	5,540	13,272
11. MONMOUTHSHIRE AND WALES.			
In ... ..	102	595	905
Out ... ..	1,639	8,472	18,305
ENGLAND AND WALES. (So far as returned.)			
In ... ..	4,706	13,388	16,664
Out ... ..	36,812	104,961	242,804
TOTALS ... ..	41,518	118,349	259,468



tion and competition, so as to afford perfect security for capital employed in agriculture ; and secondly, a complete assimilation of the Poor-laws in the several parts of the United Kingdom. When it appears that any necessary improvements require the action of the legislature, some persons are apt to abandon all hope of their being

Thus it appears that 242,804 children, 104,961 women, and 36,812 men, all able-bodied, were relieved out of the workhouse ; and that, while out-door relief was thus given to 384,577, only 34,758, or less than one-tenth of that number, were relieved in the workhouse. It also appears that this large preponderance of persons receiving out-door relief is not peculiar to Lancashire, but exists in every district in England. These facts are entirely inconsistent with the assertions of the *Globe*.

It is also stated in the *Globe* that the great amount of out-door relief in England and Wales referred to in the Address, is a phenomenon peculiar to the present time, and depends on the crisis of the cotton manufacture arising out of the American war. But this is an error. Out of 843,806 persons relieved in England on the 1st of January, 1857, only 123,382 were relieved in the workhouses, and 720,424 obtained out-door relief.

The writer in the *Globe* asserts that the law is the same in England and Ireland. "It is much more surprising that Professor Ingram should not know the state of the Poor Law in his own country, and not be aware that the same right to relief exists in favour of the destitute in Ireland as in England, enforceable in the same manner, grantable at the discretion of the same parties (the board of guardians), and marked by the same absence of an appeal to higher authority from the decision. Most surprising of all it is that he should not know that similar exemptions in favour of the able-bodied to those allowed in England form a part of the law in Ireland, and that under the same law as that now in force there, many thousands of Irish labourers, and their dependants, were in legal receipt of relief by virtue of those exceptions, during the time of the famine, as many hundreds are at the present time."

But in this also he is mistaken. In Dr. Hancock's Report to the Lord Lieutenant "On the Supposed Progressive Decline of Irish Prosperity," the following sentences occur, p. 62 :—"English statesmen, and Englishmen generally, turn to the poor relief as the first test to ascertain at any time the pressure on the poorer classes in Ireland ; and they naturally compare the numbers relieved in Ireland with the numbers relieved in England.

"But any conclusion drawn from this comparison, is almost certain to be erroneous, for the large and fundamental differences between the poor law in the two countries prevent the numbers relieved in each being truly or fairly comparable.

"In Ireland no able-bodied labourer, no matter how great or unavoidable his want may be, can receive out-door relief while the workhouse is not full ; in England any labourer in want, who is prepared to submit to a labour test, can be, and usually is, relieved, without being asked to enter a workhouse. In Ireland no pauper has an absolute right to relief ; in England the poor have a right to relief, if willing to submit to the tests imposed."

The fact of the large numbers who received out-door relief during the Irish famine, which is misinterpreted by the *Globe*, is explained as follows in the same Report, p. 65 :—

"The act of 1847, allowing out-door relief, only allowed it to able-bodied persons for two months at a time, where it should be shown to the satisfaction of the Commissioners that in-door relief could not be given.

"The workhouses were wholly unable to accommodate the numbers receiving rations in 1847, hence the great number receiving out-door relief in 1848.

"Workhouse extension, however, took place, and 32 new unions were formed, and 32 workhouses erected, increasing the original number from 131 to 163.

"This extended workhouse accommodation began to take effect in 1849 ; for, whilst the persons in workhouses rose from 600,000 to 932,000, the numbers receiving out-door relief fell from 1,400,000 to 1,200,000. In 1850, the pressure of distress abated, and the extended workhouse accommodation came into very



effected ; especially if the proposed measures are thought, however erroneously, to conflict with the interests of powerful classes. And this despair of legislative progress is likely to produce one or other of two disastrous effects—either social inertia or political discontent. Looking, however, at the history of the country during the last forty years, I do not find that such hopelessness is in the slightest degree justified by fact. The modern policy in the government of Ireland dates from the administration of the Marquess of Wellesley, with Sir Robert Peel for Home Secretary. The first fruits of the new order of things then introduced were, the Commission of Inquiry into the state of education in 1824, which brought to light the large Irish-speaking element to which I alluded at the outset, and the celebrated committees of the Lords and Commons on the state of Ireland, in 1825. Close upon these inquiries followed practical reforms which have been continued in unbroken succession down to the present time. The political disabilities of Protestant Dissenters were first removed ; next came the Emancipation of the Roman Catholics. Ample provision was made for the education of the poor. The police system was brought into full operation. The smaller towns were enabled to govern themselves. Ireland participated in Parliamentary Reform. The administration of justice was improved by the appointment of stipendiary magistrates, and by the reform of the constitution of juries. The fiscal powers of grand juries were regulated. Legal provision was made for the relief of destitution. The municipal corporations were placed on a broad and liberal basis. And finally, the improvement of the laws relating to land was decisively commenced, by the institution of the Landed Estates Court. These are only the principal elements in a series of measures which, taken in the aggregate, make up the largest peaceful revolution in the history of the world.

Such a review of what has been done in our own time, and almost within our own memory, is well fitted to remove all despondency respecting the future course of legislation. That such great and extensive reforms have been effected within so short a period by

general operation, and so the power of granting out-door relief to the able-bodied was gradually taken away. This explains the fact, that whilst the numbers receiving out-door relief fell 841,917 in 1850, the number receiving in-door relief fell only 126,582. The further fall of 320,651 in the recipients of out-door relief in 1851 compared with 98,259, fall in the recipients of in-door relief, shows the same causes in operation."

In 1862, the Irish Poor Law Commissioners report that there was workhouse accommodation for 146,927, and only 60,447 inmates, and that they had consequently not been called on or empowered to issue a single order authorizing out-door relief to able-bodied persons from the workhouse being unable to receive them.

In 1863, the Commissioners report that in one union where the workhouse was, from infectious disease, unfit for the reception of children, out-door relief was, for less than three months, in 1862, allowed in that union to persons having children dependent on them, and to orphan and deserted children.

Notwithstanding the assertion of the *Globe*, it does not appear from the Reports of the Irish Poor Law Commissioners, for 1862 and 1863, that there was, in the period to which those reports relate, a single able-bodied man receiving out-door relief in Ireland.



the mere force of peaceful inquiry and discussion unanswerably proves that the governing classes of the empire are perfectly accessible to evidence and argument. In the constitution under which we live, to carry any measure essential to the general welfare—whatever special interests may be arrayed against it—it is only necessary to appeal, by well established facts and sound reasoning, to the intelligence and equity of our statesmen. The members of this Society do not, as such, seek to intrude into the province of the politician. Our business is to discover and demonstrate, by the application of scientific principles, the legislative action appropriate to each phase of society and each group of economic conditions. At what precise time, and in what particular form, our conclusions can be adopted in practice, is a question of political expediency, which those who are acquainted with the varying exigencies of public life can determine better than we. But it is encouraging to know that in endeavouring, by our researches and discussions, to overthrow error and to establish truth, we are labouring at no unpractical—no hopeless—task; that any wise suggestion developed here may one day become a beneficent reality, a living agency for good; and that thus, without sitting in the councils of the State, or mingling in the strife of parties, we may, each of us, do something towards the improvement of the institutions of our country.