

LOUGH NEAGH

UNDER

DRAINAGE & NAVIGATION LAWS.

COPIES OF MEMORIALS, &c. ;
REPORTS OF RECENT DEPUTATIONS
TO THE LORD LIEUTENANT OF IRELAND ;
RETROSPECT OF THE PAST ;
AND SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE.

BY
JOHN HANCOCK, J.P.

Secretary to the Drainage Trust.

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formed for the purpose of trying to induce the Government not to adopt the report of the Royal Commission recommending the sale of the canal, but to put it in proper repair, and lease it to them, on an undertaking being given for the payment of the interest on the Government expenditure. The question had engaged a great deal of attention in Ulster, and meetings had been held in all parts of the province to urge upon the Government the desirability of taking the course which the company was prepared to suggest, and to abandon the recommendation of the Commission. The deputation now before his Excellency represented important interests in the North, and their presence on this occasion afforded unmistakable proof of the unanimity of opinion that prevailed with reference to this movement. At the present time the canal was in such an unfavourable condition for traffic as to be useless, and, unless a considerable sum of money was expended upon it, they could not hope to develop the traffic which it would otherwise enjoy. The object of the deputation was to lay before his Excellency, and through him before the Government, a suggestion which they hoped would be favourably received. He might say that the canal cost the Government at least £1,000 a year. What they proposed to do was to take the canal out of the hands of the Government, provided it was put in proper order. The Government engineer estimated that it would take £10,000 to put the canal in order. What they were there to suggest was that it should be leased by the Government for a certain number of years to be fixed by the Government, and that the lessees be bound to pay interest at the rate of £300 a year for the outlay of that £10,000. They thought that a matter of such importance to the North of Ireland—a continuous navigation at the one end, and the future prospect of navigation being carried out with advantage through Lough Erne at the other—demands the favourable consideration of Government. Ulster had been distinguished in those last years which had been so unfortunate for Ireland by its peaceable condition, by its loyal and proper submission to the law, by its industries, although those industries had suffered through the state of other parts of the country, and they considered that they had now a claim upon Government, even to the extent of asking them to lay out money without receiving any return. But that was not their proposal. What they proposed to do was to give the Government a return for the outlay in the shape of interest—not a profit interest—in order that the navigation between the East of Ireland and the West—between Lough Erne, Lough Neagh, and the Shannon—should be properly maintained.

Mr. W. A. ROBINSON said that, with the view of saving the time of his Excellency, some papers containing information as to the history and present position of the Ulster Canal were forwarded to the Under Secretary. The Lagan Navigation Company, which he represented, had shown that canals can live and do good service even when running alongside a railway. During the last year

12,000 tons of coal and other heavy goods had been carried over the canal from Belfast inland. The Lagan Company owns a steam-tug, which tows barges to and from the different ports on Lough Neagh, as well as up the Blackwater River, about eight miles, to the entrance of the Ulster Canal, which connects Lough Neagh with Lough Erne. The fact that the traffic on the Ulster Canal had been almost nil arose from the other fact, that, in its present state, it could only give an intermittent draught of four feet of water, which, even if it were permanent, would not permit a profitable traffic. There could be little doubt that if the Ulster Canal were put in order so as to admit of five feet draught of water all the year round, a considerable traffic would be created, which would be highly beneficial to the country. A company is in existence, called the Inland Navigation Company, having a capital of £20,000. About one-fourth was subscribed, but the movement was arrested on the publication of the advertisement by the Board of Works, that, unless within three months an adequate offer should be made for the canal as it stood, it would be dismantled and sold in lots. The company he referred to was got up principally with the view of creating traffic, and that company would be wound up as soon as the directors learned that the late decision of the Government was final. That company, strengthened and enlarged, would accept a lease of the canal, when repaired, for a term of years, working it under the superintendence of the Board of Works, and it would pay to the Government a rent-charge of £300 a year by way of interest on the proposed outlay, getting, say, two years' grace in order to give time to build barges and develop traffic. In conclusion, he had only to state that in the district through which the Ulster Canal runs fuel is getting scarcer, the bogs are fast getting used up, and the time is not far distant when coal must take the place of turf. Canals are much better adapted than railways for the carriage of coal. It could be carried cheaper and with less breakage by water than by rail. The deputation, therefore, respectfully desired to impress upon his Excellency their unanimous opinion that it would be a public disaster if a waterway 44 miles in length—an important link in the chain of inland navigation in the North of Ireland—should be blotted out, when for a moderate sum it might be made available for traffic, and do good service to the trade of the whole district.

Mr. JOHN JAFFÉ, President of the Belfast Chamber of Commerce, said he had been requested to attend as one of the deputation to support the memorial to his Excellency which the Chamber had adopted on this subject. The text of the memorial was as follows:—"Your memorialists desire respectfully to call the attention of her Majesty's Government to the importance, not only of maintaining in its entirety, but of, if possible, improving, the existing system of inland navigation of Ireland. Such system consists partly of natural lakes and rivers, and partly of artificially constructed canals, the whole forming a complete system of inland

navigation and arterial drainage, which has been of immense service to the country in providing it with cheap carriage for farm produce, &c., from the interior, and coals and other heavy articles which cannot bear much enhancement of their cost, from the seaports to the interior of the country. Your memorialists view with alarm the recommendation to sell the Ulster Canal, on which so large a sum of public money has been expended—a recommendation which was not unanimous, and which your memorialists see the Board of Works purpose to give effect to. Your memorialists, therefore, recommend, instead of such a proposed sale, that a further sum of money not exceeding £10,000 be spent in putting the Ulster Canal into a state of efficiency and repair, and that it be leased to a company which is prepared to take such lease on equitable terms." Speaking in support of the memorial, Mr. Jaffé urged upon his Excellency, in the interest of the important part of the country represented by the deputation, to advise the Government to accept the proposal now made, with a view of developing the inland navigation of the country. If the Government favoured the project now which the deputation were endeavouring to advance, he believed it would be attended with beneficial results, not the least of which would be that it would stimulate employment in districts which were at present in a rather backward condition.

SIR JOHN PRESTON said he had the honour to represent the Harbour Commissioners of Belfast, and their case was that they had recently sought for a Bill in Parliament, and obtained that Bill, for £8,000. They looked upon the proposal to close this canal as an interference with the traffic coming through the port of Belfast. At all events, they considered it would to some extent interfere with the income of the trust, and that was why he had been deputed to represent the views of the board before his Excellency in the unavoidable absence of the chairman. For his own part, he thought it would be well if this question were considered from a national point of view, and not regarded merely from a local or provincial standpoint. He was sure the history of this canal was not new to his Excellency. In 1844 the sum of £300,000 was expended by the Government in this enterprise, and they in the North thought it rather strange that a suggestion which amounted to the throwing away of such a considerable amount should for a moment be entertained. They hoped, in the interest of the public and in the interest of the commercial community of Belfast and Ulster, that this would not be done. As had been stated by Mr. Macartney, the Government engineer estimated that the canal could be put in proper order by the expenditure of £10,000. That was an estimate that he did not for a moment question, and he was quite sure that if the Government expended that or any other sum they might find to be sufficient in adapting the canal for traffic, the company would be glad and willing to take it off their hands on the terms mentioned. They considered that it was not too much to ask the Government to expend a sum so

small in a matter of national importance, and they sincerely hoped that his Excellency would see his way to place their case before the Government in such a manner as to secure the object which they had in view.

Mr. EWART, M.P., said his Excellency had already heard the views of the Chamber of Commerce and of the Harbour Commissioners expressed, and he thought he could speak on behalf of the town which he had the honour to represent in favour of the prayer of the memorial. In his experience he could recollect no subject in connection with which such unanimity prevailed. There was not at present efficient accommodation between Belfast and Lough Neagh. What was proposed to be done was to make available the canal between Lough Neagh and Lough Erne. This, as his Excellency would see, would give great scope for water communication between Belfast—the mercantile capital of that country—and a great portion of the North of Ireland. The object to be attained was, therefore, a very considerable one, while the amount of money required was very small indeed. They did not come to ask the Government for money. They only asked for a loan of £10,000 at a low rate of interest. He had only to say that Belfast was deeply interested in this matter, and they were exceedingly anxious that the water communication to which he had referred should be maintained, and they would deeply regret if they were thrown altogether upon the railway communication. They all knew how great monopolists railway companies were, and they would like to have a healthy competition by water as far as possible. They had in the North of Ireland a great many lakes, and his Excellency would readily understand that the province afforded every facility for the successful development of the water system.

Mr. WILLIAM FRAZER, representing the Newry Town Commissioners, supported the object of the deputation, and spoke of the advantages of inland navigation as a commercial economy, not only in this country, but in all parts of the world. The inhabitants of Newry and the surrounding district looked upon the project put forward by the deputation and the improvement of the Ulster canal as calculated to benefit greatly the people of that important part of Ireland, and they hoped the Government would see their way to meet the views of the deputation.

Mr. J. F. ERSKINE, on behalf of the Newry Navigation Company, also spoke in support of the project.

Major SAUNDERSON spoke on behalf of the County Cavan, and more especially the dwellers on Lough Erne. The Government had advanced towards the drainage of Lough Erne a sum of £30,000 for the purpose of maintaining this navigation, and, therefore, they thought to destroy the connecting link between Lough Erne and the sea would be a disastrous mistake. With regard to the canal, the reason that commission reported directly against it was that there had practically been no traffic on it for some years past. But this deputation wished to point out to his Excellency

that this was mainly—he thought entirely—owing to the canal not being in a condition which rendered navigation profitable or possible. The object of the deputation was to secure his Excellency's personal sympathy in the matter. They did not seek a great outlay, and they had shown that that outlay would be to a certain extent compensated for by the payment of interest on the sum advanced. This consideration ought to weigh with her Majesty's Government, and if it was necessary to cite an additional reason he might mention the perfect unanimity that existed on this question; indeed, as was proved by the movement for the revision of the postal service as well as by the present movement, when Irishmen went on the water they appeared to be of one mind.

Mr. GIVAN, M.P., Co. Monaghan, said he represented a county deeply interested in this matter. It might be said that there was ample railway communication along the sides of the canal. But the railway was not found to be the best suited mode of conveyance for all kinds of goods. Coals, for instance, were damaged by being conveyed by rail. With regard to grain, it was a most important matter for the farmers to be able at once to ship their grain without bags or sacks, which they could not do viâ railway. Then, again, the railway company charged so heavily for the carriage of long timber that long lengths of timber in the inland towns were very dear—much more expensive than they would be if carried by canal.

Mr. GEORGE KNIGHT stated that the people of Clones were unanimous in their desire to have this canal set right, and referred to large quantities of potatoes, hay, and straw which the farmers would ship if the canal were available for traffic. Since the amalgamation of the railways the rates had gone up from 10 to 20 per cent., and competition by water carriage was now required.

His EXCELLENCY, in reply, said—Mr. Macartney, Mr. Ewart, and gentlemen, I recognise at once the very important and influential character of the deputation which has come to see me, and which I have great pleasure in receiving here. Major Saunderson has referred to the unanimity that exists in all the representative towns in Ulster on this subject. He said that unanimity appeared to prevail in Ireland on all matters connected with water. I can only say, as far as the Government is concerned, it is their wish to do justice and what is right for every interest of the country, whether the matter referred to be land or water; and with regard to this particular subject I may observe that what the Government has to look to is to see whether the proposal for keeping open this canal is one that will advance the interests and promote the prosperity of an important district. I readily admit that no part of Ireland has a stronger or a better claim to consideration on the part of the Government than Ulster, not only on account of the great loyalty of the North and the peaceful character maintained by the people there during a number of years when disturbance we all regret occurred in other parts of this country, but also from the indepen-

dence of the people of your district. I do not think there can be a matter of greater compliment to the people of Ulster than the fact that has been mentioned, that they have so seldom gone forward to seek assistance from Government. I am sure you will admit this is one of the things Ulster may be most proud of, that in carrying on the various industrial occupations of its inhabitants they did not find it necessary to look to Government for assistance. At the same time I freely admit that there are certain circumstances in which it is necessary for the Government to come in and give assistance. In former days Government gave a considerable loan for the very purpose of making this canal, and I am sure they will be always ready to consider any question where the welfare and prosperity of the people can be advanced by Government assistance; but I think we ought to see that what is asked for is likely to succeed. Now, it certainly is a very difficult matter to get over, that a commission that was appointed by the Government has, after carefully looking into the whole matter, strongly recommended that this canal should not be continued unless it could be leased at once to an independent party. That, I must say, is a rather serious thing, for I believe that same commission carefully entered into the whole subject; but I understand from you the reason you give for the canal not being continued is that there is not water enough in it to put it in that state in which traffic could be properly carried on. Even with that difficulty, it seems somewhat strange that no company has taken up the offer that was made by the Government of leasing them this canal. I believe the Government were prepared to take almost any offer that might be made which would ensure that the canal would be maintained and kept open by the company after it got a lease of it. Even if it had to lay out a considerable sum upon it, I should have thought, if there was a likelihood of much traffic from the canal, that persons who would be interested in the prosperity of the traffic and the interests of their own country would have come forward and laid out as much as might be necessary to put the canal in working order. I would like to know what reason there was for no offer being made in response to the Government's proposal; and I would also like to ask what is the traffic that is expected from the canal? I think we all agree that if there has been no traffic, and not much likelihood of any, it is rather a large amount of money to continue to lay out for a capital sum on this traffic, which has already cost so much money. I certainly understood from the argument that without this connecting link it must affect the Lough Erne navigation, which has been already undertaken, and for which the Government has given a considerable sum of money. Is it the case that you expect a considerable through traffic from Lough Erne to Lough Neagh and Belfast—"Yes"—and that without this Ulster Canal the Lough Erne navigation will be very much damaged? This, I understand to be one of the reasons. While I can understand that, I think, at the same time, it

will be necessary to see that there will be some considerable traffic down the canal. I don't say that it would be necessary absolutely to have a profit on the canal; but it seems to me that, unless some prospect of considerable traffic is shown, there is certainly strong reason for the report of the Commission which so lately reported on this subject. I would just refer to one matter, which is the sum of money that would be required—the £10,000 by which our engineer, Mr. Adams, recommended that the canal should be restored. I am not quite clear, without further reference to the papers before me, whether that is an estimate which the Government and its scientific representatives would accept as a final definition of the sum that would be necessary to put the canal in proper order for traffic. I imagine, if anything was done, further inquiry would have to be made on this subject. Of course, as you know, this matter does not rest finally with me. You come to me as the head of the Irish Government, and I of course with great pleasure receive you and hear your views. It is my duty to represent what you say to the Treasury, with whom the matter finally rests; and I need not say that I will give my opinion on the subject. I have no doubt, from past experience, that they will kindly consider whatever recommendation I have to make. I understand that the Treasury have not closed the subject, and that they are willing to take the matter into consideration, and will be prepared to consider any proposal which you or others may make in reference to the Ulster Canal. That may be a satisfactory announcement to you if you were not aware of it before. Do I understand from what has been said that there is already in existence a company which will be ready to make a proposal to undertake the navigation for a certain length of time of the Ulster Canal, finding themselves a sum of £300 a year, which they will pay as the interest on the £10,000, that being the sum estimated as necessary for the purpose of putting the canal in working order?

Mr. ROBINSON—£300 was the sum named by way of interest.

His EXCELLENCY—But do I understand that the company has already been formed?

Mr. ROBINSON—Yes, and was in course of getting the full sum subscribed—£20,000—when the announcement went forth that the Government would not lay out the money. That company is now ready, if the canal is put in proper order, to take a lease of it and work it, and to pay £300 by way of interest on the outlay which it is necessary to make.

His EXCELLENCY—Then, this is a satisfactory proposal for me to report to the Treasury, and I think I need not say anything further, except merely to express to you my strong desire to do that which is good for the material prosperity of that important part of the country, having some guarantee that, while we may get assurance that what is going to be done will be of that character which you expect, we may be satisfied that the adoption of your

views would not be throwing good money after bad, but would really develop the trade and prosperity of the district. I might ask, before the deputation retires, what kind of traffic do you expect on this canal?

Mr. MACARTNEY said, heavy goods—such as timber, coal, iron, slates, minerals, manures, pottery, potatoes, grain, drainage tiles, and so on—and perhaps cattle.

Mr. PORTER spoke of the necessity for continuing the canal system on to the Shannon. It was only right, he said, to tell his Excellency that if they left thirty miles undone the want of those thirty miles would largely affect the utility of the scheme.

Mr. MACARTNEY supplemented his remarks by stating that the importance of water carriage was now beginning to be recognised in England, and a ship canal was even projected between Manchester and Liverpool. There was only one railway company in the North of Ireland, and the public were entirely at the mercy of that company owing to the absence of any competition. The rate for goods from the interior to Belfast was sometimes more than it was to distant places in England.

His EXCELLENCY—Was there any considerable traffic on this canal at any time?

Mr. ROBINSON—Two or three boats passed up and down every day.

Mr. REA said that there was a traffic of 900 tons a week.

After some further observations, the deputation withdrew.

On May 25th, 1883, His Excellency the Lord Lieutenant received a deputation on the subject of the drainage and navigation works of the Lower Bann from Lough Neagh to Coleraine. The object of the deputation was to represent to his Excellency the necessity of removing the locks and weirs on the Lower Bann in the interest of the better drainage of the district, the navigation for the benefit of which the locks and weirs were constructed having ceased to be of any practical use. The deputation consisted of the Attorney-General, M.P.; Sir Thomas M'Clure, Bart., M.P.; Messrs. John Carey, Toome; Robert Douglas, Glenstal; Robert Rankin, Curragh; Thomas Kelly, Toomebridge; and William Ellis, shipowner, Coleraine.

Sir THOMAS M'CLURE, in introducing the deputation, said they had no professional gentleman with them, and they came there to tell their own plain, unvarnished story of injuries they were suffering from the flooding of the river—injuries which extended over hundreds of thousands of acres.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said that Mr. Carey, who had a very great practical knowledge of the matter, had a carefully prepared statement in writing which he would read to his Excellency.

Mr. CAREY said that they came there to represent to his Excellency the deleterious effects of the floods on the lands adjoining the Lower Bann. Lough Neagh, as his Excellency was no doubt aware, was the largest freshwater lake but one in Europe. It was the catchment basin of one-nineteenth part of the whole of Ireland, and there was only one way of escape from this to the sea, and this was artificially restricted so much that it was only sufficient for one-fourth of the volume of water, leaving three-fourths to be impounded on the district in ruinous floods. The owners of land adjoining the river had for 25 years been taxed for the abatement of these floods, and there was no abatement. Beginning with 1847 the cost of the drainage and navigation works had been £250,000. Instead of that money being exclusively applied to drainage works, £110,000 of it was, in the first instance, applied to the project of navigation of the Lower Bann, which defeated the expected drainage. Two such schemes so opposed to each other as drainage and navigation could not succeed. Moreover, the navigation had entirely failed. After having been tried by four successive companies for ten years in various kinds of traffic it entirely collapsed ten years ago, and the steamboat was then put up to auction and sold at a loss of £975 on the first cost. Railways had since then been constructed in the district having direct communication with Derry and Belfast. The grand jury taxation for the maintenance of these useless navigation works was in the aggregate £30,000. What they now asked was that the Government should carry out the recommendation of the Royal Commission contained in their report of the 19th October, 1880, in which they advise the Lower Bann to be dealt with solely and entirely in the interest of the drainage of the country.

Mr. DOUGLAS said he had been sent there to represent the damages that the people sustained along the banks of the river through flooding. He had the misfortune of living on the banks of the river, and he could solemnly state that he was injured in some years by the flooding of the river to the extent of £40. He had also seen people's flax and oats strewn over his grounds, brought down by the floods. The people had paid a very large amount of money for drainage and navigation purposes. The Government led them to believe that they would give them a certain amount of drainage and a certain amount of navigation, and they had paid for it, the last instalment having been paid in 1881. But the people had not got anything in return. They did not wish that the navigation should be destroyed, if it could be maintained along with efficient drainage. But they believed it was impossible to use it for both.

Mr. RANKIN said he came from the county Derry side. In his evidence before the Royal Commission he had referred to the

damage they sustained through the floods. The farmers had passed through a series of years of agricultural depression, and had sustained heavy losses. The farmers not in the immediate neighbourhood of the river complained of having to pay a tax for the maintenance of these navigation works. In the half barony of Coleraine they had also to pay a threepenny rate for the Derry Central Railway, at the same time that they were taxed for a navigation that never was a navigation except in name.

Mr. KELLY, Toome, a proprietor on both sides of the river, said that he had grass lands, which, owing to the floods, could not be grazed for more than four or five months in the year. Moreover, the floods left a deleterious deposit on the lands.

Mr. ELLIS, Coleraine, said that when the works were first constructed they did improve the navigation, but the improved drainage of the country had so increased the rapidity of the rise of the lake that it now rose to its full height in half the time it did formerly. The navigation works had become altogether useless, and the ratepayers were obliged to pay an average of £1,500 a year for their own destruction. The engineers at the late assizes for both counties submitted their reports. Mr. Barton suggested that if two feet were taken off the weirs and the sluices opened, it would produce a benefit as regarded the drainage, but that to take away the whole of that obstruction would produce no remedy. But he (Mr. Ellis) thought that if taking off two feet would produce a benefit, taking off four or six feet would increase the benefit. As to the navigation it might have been of use 30 years ago, but it was of no use now.

His EXCELLENCY, in reply, said—Mr. Attorney-General and Gentlemen,—I have received with great pleasure the deputation from those interested in the Lower Bann, and will give great attention to what has been said by them. There appear to be two matters raised by the deputation—one in the form of a memorial, which I had the pleasure of receiving some time ago, and the other which has been raised by some who have spoken here to-day. The prayer of the memorial is that the recommendations of the Royal Commission which sat a few years ago should be carried into effect, which recommendation is that, if the county grand juries consent, the Board of Navigation Trustees should be dissolved, and that the entire works should be transferred to the drainage trustees. The other matter is that Government should undertake the completion of the drainage of the river. It has been stated that navigation and drainage cannot go together. I am aware that there are difficulties in the way of drainage and navigation going together; but still they are not insuperable, and I was glad to hear from members here present that, if the navigation were of any use, and could be maintained while the flooding would not be increased, they would not have any objection to the navigation. Navigation by canals is a very important matter, especially as affording the means of competition with railways—a very wholesome thing.

And, though one of the speakers said that inland navigation no longer succeeded, and quoted a case near Glasgow where a railway has been built on the bed of a canal, I think we should find a good many instances to the contrary, even in Ireland. I believe that the Royal Canal and another canal do a very useful work in carrying heavy goods which cannot be conveniently carried by the railway, and which can be carried in a slower way by the canals. Only last week I received a very important and influential deputation from Ulster, who strongly urged on the Government that the Ulster Canal should not be given up, for the very reason that it gave accommodation, and that it was very important to maintain this particular link in the communication between one part of the country and another. I am only saying this because I want to guard myself against being supposed to agree with the statements of the deputation—that inland navigations are no longer of any importance. I am not sufficiently acquainted with the amount of the navigation that exists on the Lower Bann to be able to give an opinion whether it is necessary to maintain it or not. But the Government have not to come to a decision as to whether the navigation must give way in order that the drainage of the district may be efficiently carried out. What the Government have said is this—We are quite prepared to consider the report of the Royal Commission; but, having communicated with the two bodies most interested in the question—namely the grand juries of the counties of Antrim and Derry—we have received an answer from those two grand juries that “they were not prepared at present to consent to the proposals which the Royal Commission have recommended.” It is very difficult for the Government to step in and say, we will override the decision of these two grand juries, who are local bodies, no doubt conversant with the subject in which you are also interested, and on which you can bring intelligence to bear and make them feel the weight of your arguments. It is very difficult, as I have said, for Government to override the decision of the Royal Commission; because you will observe that the Royal Commission do not recommend that the Government should do away with this board; they make it contingent on the local bodies consenting to this. I should like to hear something more as to what had taken place in the two grand juries, and as to whether their decision depends in any way on the result of works now being carried out at Coleraine—very considerable works, as I understand. And these very works may have a most considerable influence on the outfall at Coleraine. It may be a question whether it would not be prudent to wait to see what would be the result of these works. Then, as to the works which should be carried out by the Government. The Government, as a rule in Ireland, have contributed to navigation works where it was very important and desirable to improve the navigation; but they have not, as a rule, contributed directly to the drainage of the land: and for this reason, that in order to justify drainage you must show that it directly

benefits the lands affected ; and it is only a just principle that those who are benefited should contribute towards the works. You cannot say that same with regard to navigation. It has an effect on the country at large, and beyond the district which it goes through. In some instances I am quite ready to admit the Government have stepped in, and have, for the mere sake of the drainage, contributed towards the works. That is a matter which, of course, they will consider in this case, and very carefully consider. It has been argued at different times that the very works that have been carried out have caused, or have increased the floods, and therefore that, on that account, it is only right for the Government to step in, and try to remedy the evil. I cannot answer whether, in this case, any statement of that kind can be made. If it is made the Government will, of course, consider very carefully any proposal that may be made to remedy the evil. As far as I understand the case, there is very great difference of opinion as to what ought to be done. Some people say, "Remove the weirs." That will destroy the navigation, but it may not remove the floods. The channel way below may be of such capacity that it would not allow a sufficient outfall. That, of course, is an engineering question. Then it is said that putting more sluices would be of advantage. Well, possibly, putting certain additional sluices on these weirs would have a desirable effect. These are difficult matters to decide upon. I am sorry that Captain M'Kerlie was unable to be here to-day, having been called away on important business. He would probably have been able to answer some of these important questions from the experience he has had of such works. I don't know whether I can say very much more than I have already said to you. I will carefully consider what you have laid before me, and put forward your views to the Treasury : but I should like, before you go, that you should give me some information on those two points—namely, as to the action taken by the two grand juries, and whether the works they are carrying out at Coleraine are likely to have any affect on the works in which you are interested.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL, M.P., said that the grand jury of the county of Tyrone had definitely approved of the recommendations of the Royal Commission.

MR. ELLIS said that twelve months ago the grand jury of Derry resolved to postpone the consideration of the matter pending the carrying out of the works at Coleraine. By the advice of Sir Richard Wallace those interested in the improvement of the drainage appeared before the grand jury at Belfast at the last assizes. The evidence they gave was uncontradicted, and they succeeded by a majority of one ; but it was insisted upon that the resolution should be put as a substantive one, and in the interval a member came in, and thus the numbers were made equal, and the resolution was lost. He (Mr. Ellis) had himself appeared before the grand jury. He knew their prejudices and how difficult it would be to overcome them, and Sir Hervey Bruce alleged that

under the report the Government would have unlimited powers of taxation. He (Mr. Ellis) contended that that was not so, and that the Government would have a right to do it, because the works had been ineffective. They did not refuse their consent, but postponed the matter; and they refused to fix any time for its definite consideration. Such were the prejudices against them in the grand jury of Londonderry that he said he would go to Parliament and ask to have the grand juries abolished. As regarded the difficulty of navigation on the Bann, he might say that he purchased a small steamer for the purpose of the carriage of coals up that river. The vessel had to be brought over the bar at high tide, taken up to Coleraine—six miles—where it had to wait until low water to get through under the bridge, and then, proceeding a mile farther, up to the cutts, it had again to wait till high water.

HIS EXCELLENCY said he was not arguing strongly in favour of keeping up the navigation. What he said was that they must get the local bodies to act first. The Government were quite ready to consider, and were well disposed to carry out, the report of the commission provided the local bodies would do their part. If the local bodies would follow the example of Tyrone and give their consent, he thought there would be no difficulty.

MR. ELLIS feared very much, from his local knowledge, that the Derry grand jury would not consent.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL laid before his Excellency the resolutions of several boards of guardians in favour of the views of the deputation.

HIS EXCELLENCY said that if the weirs were taken away it would affect the navigation of Lough Neagh.

MR. ELLIS said they would rather have the weir at Toome kept up.

SIR THOMAS M'CLURE understood that the grand jury of Derry had communicated with the Board of Works, asking that the opinion of the Antrim grand jury should be forwarded to them.

HIS EXCELLENCY said he was quite aware of the immense importance of having the drainage arranged properly in a district, and he would be very anxious indeed that some arrangement could be come to.

SIR THOMAS M'CLURE having thanked his Excellency for his courtesy,

The deputation withdrew.

On May 25th, 1883, the Lough Neagh Drainage Trustees sent a memorial to the Lord Lieutenant, Earl Spencer. The following is the important part of it:—

The works were carried out under the able direction of the Commissioners, and their final award was published in 1859.

For the future maintenance of the works so executed, the final award divided the district amongst three separate sets of trustees:—

1st. *Drainage Trustees*, fifteen in number, elected triennially by 300 proprietors of the improved lands.

These Trustees have an unlimited power of taxation over 30,000 acres of improved lands.

The tax falls on the owner, and not on the occupier, although the latter derives the main advantage of efficient maintenance.

The duties are to maintain in good working order, for the double object of navigation and drainage, the Upper Bann River from its entrance into Lough Neagh to its junction with the Newry Canal, thus giving complete navigation to the rising and prosperous towns of Newry and Portadown. The Trustees are also bound to maintain 140 miles of water-courses, 59 miles of embankments, and keep all other works in their district in good order.

Since 1859 they have spent £32,500 on these objects, being a little more than £1,400 a year.

2nd. *Upper Bann Navigation Trustees*, eight in number—three appointed by each of the Grand Juries of Tyrone and Armagh, and two by the Grand Jury of the County Down, with unlimited powers of taxation, levied off the payers of county cess in certain portions of these counties. The tax is about £800 a year, expended chiefly in improving the navigation of the Blackwater River from Lough Neagh to the mouth of the Ulster Canal, and in constant dredging, which relieves the adjoining lands from flood.

3rd. *Lower Bann Navigation Trustees*, eleven in number—five appointed by each of the Grand Juries of Antrim and Derry, and one by the Borough of Coleraine—with unlimited powers of taxation over an area of 547,000 acres of land in these counties. They only expend £500 a year, which is quite insufficient for the purposes intended. These Trustees are bound by the award of 1859 to maintain the whole breadth of the river in such condition that the floods of the lake will be relieved, and also to keep the navigation in good order. For eighteen years the Trustees denied their liability, and allowed the bed of the river to silt up, and thereby obstructed the flow of the water through this—the only—outlet from the entire district.

The Drainage Trustees were reluctantly obliged to bring this default—about four years ago—under the notice of the Duke of Marlborough, the then Lord Lieutenant, who compelled dredging to be at once undertaken. In consequence of His Excellency's determination a considerable sum was spent, but not nearly enough to make up for the past eighteen years' neglect.

The Drainage Trustees, therefore, respectfully request your Excellency, through the Board of Works, to give directions for a large amount of dredging to be done this summer, so as to relieve the floods of next autumn and winter, and lessen the agitation which now greatly prevails on this subject.

The Chief Engineer of the Board of works, having examined the Lower Bann in 1877, reported to the Board that the periodical flooding complained of is chiefly due to the accumulation in this

river, and that this seriously impedes the Drainage Trustees in the discharge of their duties.

The Royal Commission on Inland Navigation, in their report,* dated February, 1882, recommended that the Lower Bann Trust should be dissolved, and that all the works, with the entire control of the river, should be transferred to the Drainage Trustees, with ample powers of local taxation, to be dealt with in the interest of the drainage of the country.

The Drainage Trustees are quite willing to undertake the management of the Lower Bann River on two conditions, viz:—

1st. That all powers and authority of taxation and expenditure, now vested in the Lower Bann Trustees, shall be transferred to the Drainage Trustees.

2nd. That the navigation of the Lower Bann shall be maintained.

It is presumed that the amalgamation of the trusts cannot be effected without an Act of Parliament, and in the present state of public business this is not likely to be obtained during the present session.

The Trustees, therefore, take the liberty of suggesting that all memorials, reports of engineers, and other documents in reference to the important matter should be referred to the Board of Works for examination, and report to Your Excellency before 1st September, so as to give sufficient time for all parties interested to confer with the Government as to legislation on this subject next Session.

Mr. Macmahon's excellent report and Mr. Harding's valuations, both of 1846, are now out of print. The Trustees would take the liberty of suggesting the issue of a second edition by the Board of Works, bringing up all official transactions to the present time.

In closing this statement, the Trustees respectfully urge that immediate pressure should be put on the Lower Bann Trustees to undertake a sufficient amount of dredging during the coming summer, and have authorized their Secretary to sign this memorial on their behalf.

(By order),

JOHN HANCOCK, *Secretary*.

On May 31st, 1883, a deputation of the Trustees waited on His Excellency in the Privy Council Chamber, Dublin Castle, for the purpose of inducing the Government to take steps to compel the Trustees of the Lower Bann to carry out their duties in such a manner as would prevent the flooding of the lands adjacent to Lough Neagh. The deputation consisted of the Hon. Robert O'Neill, Mr. F. L. Capron, J.P.; Mr. Campbell Gaussen, J.P.; Mr. J. Hancock, J.P., (Secretary), and Mr. W. J. O'Neill, C.E., (Engineer).

His Excellency, who was accompanied by Mr. Hamilton, Under Secretary; Dr. Kaye, Q.C., Assistant Under Secretary; Colonel M'Kerlie, Chairman of the Board of Works, and Mr. Courtenay

* *Vide* page 2.

Boyle, Private Secretary, and attended by Captain Barry, A.D.C., received the deputation.

The Hon. Mr. O'Neill said that the object the deputation had in waiting on His Excellency was in reference to the floods in the district of Lough Neagh, but, as His Excellency had so recently received a deputation on the same subject, he did not purpose entering into all the details. As His Excellency was aware of the works that had been done at Lough Neagh, it would not be necessary to refer to them further than to say that originally these works were carried out for the purposes of drainage and navigation combined, at a cost of £262,709 7s. 5d., of which £158,423 were expended for drainage purposes, and £104,374 for navigation. For some time the drainage of the water was to a certain extent what had been calculated, but after the lapse of some fifteen years floods began to rise, and a just outcry was raised. In January, 1873, the Grand Jury of the County of Antrim passed a resolution on the subject, and sent a memorial to the then Lord Lieutenant. Then, after a very high flood, in February, 1877, there was a meeting in Belfast of those interested in the question, over which he (the Hon. Mr. O'Neill) had the honour to preside, and the result was a memorial and a deputation to the Duke of Marlborough, the then Lord Lieutenant, asking His Grace to institute an inquiry, and see what steps should be taken to prevent the recurrence of these floods. Mr. Manning, Engineer to the Board of Works, was subsequently sent down to the district, and he made a report on the subject, the gist of which was that the original works had not been kept in the order in which they were handed over to the Trustees appointed for that purpose. He might state that the works were given into the hands of three bodies—the Trustees of the Lower Bann, the Trustees of Lough Neagh Drainage, and the Trustees of the Upper Bann Navigation. With the Upper Bann Navigation Board he had very little to say. His remarks would be referable to the Lough Neagh Drainage Trustees and the Lower Bann Navigation Board. The Lough Neagh Drainage Trustees spent £1,000 a year on the maintenance of these works. He did not know what sum the Lower Bann Navigation Trustees spent, but whatever it was, the sum spent by them was not sufficient to keep the works in the order which it was intended they should be kept in. They had been labouring under a mistake in thinking that their duties were confined to navigation purposes only, and not to drainage; and as navigation was practically *nil* in 1881, their duties were very light. However, after the Lough Neagh Trustees brought pressure on them to keep the whole of the channel open both for drainage and navigation purposes, they acknowledged that that was their duty. The reply of the Duke of Marlborough to the deputation in 1877 was to the effect that the different bodies ought to put the works into the same order in which they were handed over to them, and in consequence of that the Lough Neagh Drainage Trustees had to levy a much higher rate than they had been doing.

In 1878 they levied £5,000 instead of £1,000; in 1879 £2,000; and in 1880, £2,000; and on the works they spent a sum of over £5,000. But they might as well have thrown it into the river, because there was not the slightest use in their doing work to discharge the waters unless the channel was kept open also. The Lower Bann Navigation Trustees had not carried out the order of the Duke of Marlborough to make the river of sufficient depth to carry off the water, and the object the present deputation had in view was to ask His Excellency to take whatever steps he thought necessary either to compel them to put the channel of the river into the order and position it was in when handed over to them, or to take whatever steps he might consider necessary to enable the inhabitants of the district to gain the benefits which they were led to expect would be conferred upon them by the construction of these works, for which they had already paid an enormous sum of money.

Mr. CAPRON said that the scheme proposed in 1842 was for the drainage of the land, improvement of navigation and of the water power in connection with such drainage. The drainage was the primary object, and navigation was only intended as a means of utilising the water and making it contributory. The expenditure on drainage amounted to £158,423, of which sum the Government contributed £39,400, being a tax on the land amounting to £110,000. At the Summer Assizes of 1873 the matter was brought before the grand jury of the County of Antrim, when, as already stated, a memorial was sent to the then Lord Lieutenant; and in 1877 there was another complaint, and a further memorial was adopted. In addition to the £110,000 the land contributed, there was an annual tax which amounted to £30,000 more, showing that the land contributed £140,000 in hard cash, and he might say got nothing for it. As navigation had now practically ceased, he considered it would be a useless expenditure of money to have it continued; but he asked that the other recommendations of the Royal Commission of 1882 should be carried out. Mr. Capron then referred his Excellency to the various schemes that had been suggested for the drainage of the district.

Mr. GAUSSEN thought that no time should be lost in forcing the Lower Bann trustees to carry out the recommendations of the Royal Commissioners. With the exception of a small body, such as the Derry Grand Jury, and some people in Coleraine, they were all in favour of giving up the navigation. His Excellency had informed a previous deputation that unless all the grand juries agreed to some one plan nothing could be done; but he (Mr. Gaussen) thought it would be very hard to make the large majority suffer for the sake of a small local body, such as the Derry Grand Jury.

Mr. HANCOCK reviewed the course of action which had been taken from the time the original memorial was presented to the Board of Works, asking them to carry out a system that would prevent the lands being flooded, and would also improve the navigation

of the district. In the year 1877 the Trustees of Lough Neagh obtained the opinion of the present Mr. Justice Andrews, who stated that the Trustees of the Lower Bann were answerable for the improvement of their river for the purposes of drainage as well as navigation. They now hoped that His Excellency would use his influence with the Board of Works to carry out the steps they originally undertook. With regard to the general question of navigation, all engineers were agreed that drainage and navigation should go together in this district. They went together on the upper river, and he did not see why they should not go together on the lower river. Whatever relief was given ought to be immediate. Since the agitation commenced the Lower Bann Trustees had come forward and actually borrowed a dredger for the purpose of carrying out the improvements this autumn, but the deputation wished to put a little pressure on them and get them to go to work faster. His Excellency could also help them in another way—by directing an officer of the Public Works Department to inspect the dredging operations as they went on, for it would be difficult for the drainage trustees at the end, perhaps, of three months to distinguish the newly done works from what had been done previously. The whole object the trustees had in view was the benefit of the country, and to do what was best with the least expense to all parties concerned.

The Hon. Mr. O'NEILL said that Mr. Hancock had been connected with the works from the commencement. What the trustees of Lough Neagh wished to impress on his Excellency was that, although they had no desire to do away with navigation if it was of use to the country, yet they thought in their position as drainage trustees that whatever effect it had on the water, it was an injurious one. There was practically no navigation now, and he thought it was an injustice to the ratepayers to ask them to pay for it. If navigation was remunerative in any way the trustees had no wish to do away with it as long as it did not impede the water.

HIS EXCELLENCY.—Mr. O'Neill and Gentlemen—As you already stated, I have received several deputations on this subject, and one with regard to the sale of the Ulster Canal, which has, I think, practically very little reference to the matter brought before me now. I had, however, another deputation from, I suppose, the occupiers and people representing the various parties interested in the Lower Bann district, who strongly advocated the adoption by Government of the recommendations in the report of the Royal Commission—that was, that the Lower Bann be put under the same body of trustees, and manage the drainage, and that navigation should be done away with. With regard to what I then said on the subject of navigation and drainage, I will only just now allude to it. I thought it prudent on that occasion, as somewhat strong observations were made against navigation, to say a few words to show that I did not think as a general principle it could be laid down that navigation was incompatible with the drainage

of a district. I particularly guarded myself on that occasion from giving any opinion as to whether this applied in this particular case. No doubt there are cases in which navigation cannot be maintained, having in view the thorough drainage of the district; but there are various other cases where that may be done. I am not sure if I understood clearly one of the speakers to-day; but I think he implied that the Government had thrown over navigation on the Shannon. If that is so he is under a mistake, for though the Government have done a good deal with regard to the drainage it shews they have taken great care that navigation should be freely preserved *there*. I only make these remarks incidentally, and to repeat again what I said the other day—that the question must be left open in this case as to whether navigation should be maintained. If possible I think it should be maintained. I cannot conceive a whole district, because it finds navigation at a low ebb, saying that drainage cannot be carried out without destroying navigation, and ready to give it up. I think there should be a strong expression of opinion from every representative body on that subject before any definite decision is arrived at. With regard to the works in this drainage district, I gather from what has been said that when the drainage works were first instituted they did a great amount of good in the district. I understand from statistics gathered at the time that the health of the district was materially improved after the drainage was completed, and it is admitted that for some years after the works were completed great relief was felt in the district. Now the state of things has changed. It changed, as I understand, to a great extent owing to the filling up of a portion of the river. That is one of the statements made in the memorial you have forwarded to me; but there is another circumstance which should be remembered—that within the last few years there was a very exceptional amount of rainfall.* I think it is pertinent to notice that, whatever drainage works are carried out in a district, it will always be seen that when excessive rain comes the works will not be able always to provide against that exceptional rainfall. I do not think you will deny, possibly, a statement of that sort; but I think, on an occasion like this, when complaints are made, that it should be borne in mind that, whatever you do, you will hardly be able to prevent flooding when exceptional rainfalls occur. I should be exceedingly glad if any arrangement could be made for relieving this district of floods in rainy times. While, as I have already stated, it is quite impossible to meet the case of all floods, I quite admit that in many districts you may be able to gradually relieve the district by proper works, and in ordinary cases of rain you will be able to prevent a great destruction of crops and deterioration of land. Well, now, the question is whether you will be able to make such arrangements in your districts to enable some scheme to be adopted to carry out

these works. Allusion has been made to the difficulty of getting the Grand Jury of the county of Antrim to agree to any one plan. That may be so, and the Government will be perfectly prepared to consider whether they should proceed on any other statements than those made by the grand juries. I alluded to the grand juries, the other day, as they are the bodies particularly referred to by the commissioners. The Government could bring in a bill to amalgamate the two bodies—that is, the drainage body and the navigation body—if the contributing counties consented to give up navigation. If it can be shown on inquiry that those interested are agreed to some scheme for carrying out these works, then, I think, the Government would oppose no obstacle to the introduction of a bill for carrying them out. You are all aware, of course, that no change can be made without some bill being introduced. I do not know how you propose to carry out these works. It has been stated both on the occasion of the last deputation and to-day that it is of little use carrying out the works in your district unless the river below is thoroughly cleansed out and scoured; and that even the sluices will not have effect unless this is done. No doubt, there is a certain obligation on the Lower Bann trustees to maintain that part of the river in the same state in which it was handed over to them; but I conceive that it may be necessary to go beyond the works necessary for that purpose, and increase the capacity of the river more than was originally intended, so as to carry off the flood water. If that be so, is there any idea that the incidence of taxation should be altered, and that some of the upper lands, which I have no doubt will benefit by the larger works necessary, should bear any contribution towards this work? That may be a matter of consideration in any scheme which has to be considered. What seems to me to be very desirable, and I should be very glad to forward it, is that all the local bodies and those that are trustees should be brought together and come to some arrangement as to what scheme should be adopted for the carrying out of these changes. There is a great deal to be said in favour of combining the two bodies—those that are for drainage and those that are for navigation purposes; but it does not follow from that that navigation should be given up. That should be a matter to be considered. If between this and autumn inquiry should tend to bring about some union of the local bodies as to what should be done, I think it would be very important, and the Government would be very happy, indeed, to help you in every way they can. Of course, I should communicate on the matter with the Treasury; but I think I would have little difficulty in carrying out that part of your proposal to have the various memorials transmitted to the Board of Works with a request that they should call upon the Lower Bann Trustees to fulfil their obligations. As far as that goes, I think I may say I am favourably disposed towards your memorial. You have referred to one or two other matters, one of which is the reprinting and circulation of

Mr. Macmahon's report. I will communicate with the Treasury on that matter. It seems to be a reasonable request. With regard to your request to bring pressure on the Lower Bann trustees, I will carefully consider what is to be done in the matter; because if they have responsibilities in it, it is important they should carry them out as far as possible. I do not know that there is anything more to add to what I have said, further than to repeat that I am fully aware of the great importance of this matter; that it is very desirable to carry out as thoroughly as possible the drainage of this important district, and that, if you come to some arrangement that will enable the Government during the next session to introduce a bill for the purpose, I am sure it will give the Government great satisfaction to do so.

The HON. MR. O'NEILL, in reply to his Excellency, said it was the unanimous opinion of the trustees that navigation was injurious to the drainage.

The deputation then withdrew.

On the 19th June, 1883, his Excellency visited Coleraine and received a joint address from the Town and Harbour Commissioners, which concludes as follows:—"We regret that the time at the disposal of your Excellency prevents a personal inspection of the River Bann navigation works, the execution of which supplies the link that was required to complete the navigation from Lough Neagh to the sea, on which the Treasury and the rate-payers have made an exceedingly large expenditure of public money. The works at the mouth of the Bann are now being vigorously prosecuted, and, although not more than half executed, have already realised the most sanguine expectations of their promoters. This success has amply justified the Irish Society of London for having made the munificent grant of £30,000 towards their construction. From the replies of your Excellency to two deputations which recently submitted their views on the Lower Bann navigation, we are pleased to observe that your Excellency is fully aware of the importance of inland navigation, especially when linked with an open seaward navigation; and we hope that, on the occasion of your next visit to Coleraine, your Excellency will have an opportunity of making a personal inspection of the river Bann navigation works, the success of which is so essential to the prosperity of the district."

His Excellency's reply to the above portion of the address is as follows:—

"You refer to the works which you have instituted for improving the navigation of this locality. I appreciate very warmly all local efforts to develop the means at your disposal. I know how important it is to develop the means of communication by railroad and by water, and your efforts in improving the ap-

“proaches by sea to your town deserve the utmost commendation. I have had within the last few months several representations made to me on this subject, and you may be sure that all the various interests—and there are many and various interests concerned in this question of drainage and navigation of this district—will receive careful attention from her Majesty’s Government. I should have been glad if there had been more time at my disposal to enable me to become acquainted with your neighbourhood. I hope later on in the summer I may be able to return here, and then perhaps I will have more time at my disposal to spend with you in this locality.”

RETROSPECT AND SUGGESTIONS.

The very important answers the Lord Lieutenant has recently made to four deputations bring the Lough Neagh question to the immediate front, and render it necessary that the fullest information should be at once supplied to those interested in the future prosperity of the Province of Ulster.

The final award made in 1859 by the Commissioners of Public Works is the charter under which the three sets of Trustees of Navigation and Drainage derive their powers.

But before discussing this document it will be well to know how it was created.

Undoubtedly its existence is mainly due to the ability, courtesy, and perseverance of the Right Hon. Charles Brownlow, the first Lord Lurgan, aided, as he was, by the great experience of the Chairman of the Board of Works, Sir John Burgoyne, Bart., R.E., and the indomitable energy of Wm. T. Mulvany, Esq., one of the Commissioners.

Mr. Brownlow, after a distinguished career in Parliament, turned his attention more than fifty years ago to the improvement of his property in the County of Armagh, where he had a shore line of twenty-one miles along Lough Neagh and the Upper Bann. He secured the services of Mr. Alexander Nimmo, a distinguished engineer, who had had long experience in the reclamation of bog and flooded lands throughout Ireland.

Mr. Brownlow spent several thousands of pounds in embankments, drains, roads, and pumping engines; but, alas! without success, as he was unable to contend with the floods of Lough Neagh, which finally compelled him to abandon the works altogether.

In the year 1831 Mr. Moore O’Ferrall, M.P. obtained the first Drainage Act. But it was found unequal to cope with the magnitude of Lough Neagh and the variety of interests therein concerned. After a lapse of eleven years, Sir Robert Peel, with the

aid of his Irish Secretary, Lord Eliot, succeeded in carrying a measure for the improvement of Drainage, Navigation, and Mill power, which placed the initiative of the different schemes, as well as the execution of the works, in the hands of the Government. Lord Lurgan took early advantage of this Act; and in April, 1844, presented the following Memorial, numerously signed, to the Board of Works, they being the Commissioners appointed for the execution of the Act 5th and 6th Victoria, c. 89, entitled 'An Act to promote the Drainage of Lands and Improvement of Navigation and Water Power, in connection with such Drainage in Ireland':—

"Your Memorialists are Proprietors of, and parties interested in, certain tracts of land adjoining Lough Neagh, in the Counties of Antrim, Down, Armagh, Tyrone, and Derry, which lands are generally of an alluvial nature, and are supposed to contain about 20,000 acres, and extend all around said lough and its rivers; which lands are flooded or otherwise injured by water for about six months in the year, and are capable of being drained and improved.

"The keeping of Lough Neagh at summer level would prevent those serious evils which occur to the health of the community, and those obstacles placed in the way of improved agriculture by the winter floodings of Lough Neagh, conjointly with a vast improvement of the navigation of the district.

"Your Memorialists are desirous of availing themselves of the provisions of the Drainage Act above referred to, for the purpose of relieving the said lands, and such others as your Board shall consider may be relieved by the necessary works, from flood and other injury by water.

"Your Memorialists are ready and willing to deposit such sums as your Board shall deem necessary and sufficient for the several preliminary proceedings required to be taken.

"Your Memorialists therefore pray that all the lands so flooded may be drained, and the drainage of all the lands so injured may be improved, in conjunction with the improvement of the navigation of the district, so far as the improvement of said navigations form a part of cheap and efficient drainage, under the provisions of the aforesaid Act."

Amongst the signatures to this memorial were His Grace the Lord Primate, the Duke of Manchester, the Marquis of Hertford, Lords Charlemont, Cremorne and Lurgan, the Right Hon. G. R. Dawson, Count de Salis, Sir Edmond McNaghten, Sir Thomas Staples, and Col. Verner, M.P.

In June, 1845, the Drainage Commissioners state in their Third Annual report to Parliament that their third class of measures are "Drainage and Navigation combined;" and of these,—

"The chief districts are Lough Neagh, its tributaries, and the Lower Bann, in Ulster; the Junction Navigation by the Woodford River, to connect Ulster with Connaught, the Shannon with the North, and thereby all the inland navigations

of Ireland. In the districts just enumerated, navigation is of vital importance to the best interests of the whole country; for, though a partial public navigation at present exists in the great lakes and some of the long, deep reaches of the rivers, yet for want of suitable connection between these natural navigations, and between the lakes and the sea, the advantages which they are calculated to confer have for ages lain comparatively dormant; and the waters, which might be made the cheapest medium for the transit of goods and the consequent development of the resources of the country, have been heretofore almost unused. From the neglect of their regulation, and from artificial encroachments on their course, a fruitful source of evil has arisen, in the inundation of vast tracts of lands, to the injury, as is firmly believed, of the climate, and the health of the districts.

"In the cases under consideration, and some others in Ireland, the subjects of Navigation and Drainage are *inseparably* connected; and if either be undertaken separately, it will lead to the positive injury, or the creation of a new and difficult barrier to the formation, of the other. Thus Drainage *alone*, to be economic, would require the waters to be kept at the lowest possible level—Navigation *alone* at the highest possible level; whilst *both* can be effected *together* with perfect success, in most cases at a much less expenditure than they could be separately, and often with very little additional expenditure beyond that of *one* of them.

"Under all the circumstances, *we cannot too strongly express our opinion of the impolicy of any extensive measure being undertaken in these great districts for the object of drainage, or navigation, unless in connection with each other*; and as such projects, with respect to some of these districts, have been publicly put forward, and questions connected with them referred for our consideration, it appears to be necessary on public grounds thus to record our opinion.

"The great public importance of the cases belonging to this class, and the necessity for the parties interested making early arrangements for having the navigation part of the projects carried into effect, has induced us to delay the completion of this Report, until we should be enabled to state, at least approximately, the results which are anticipated from the surveys and engineering inquiries we have had in progress since last summer, and which, owing to the great extent of these districts and the periodical floods, could not be finally completed in all their detail before the conclusion of the present summer."

Attention is particularly requested to an important Memorial, presented to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, bearing date 10th November, 1845. It was signed, amongst others, by the Protestant and Roman Catholic Primates; the Protestant and Roman Catholic Bishops of Down; the Deans of Ross and Dromore; Lords Hertford, Charlemont, Clanwilliam, Gosford, Acheson, Lurgan, Newry and Morne; Col. Verner, M.P.; D. R. Ross, M.P.; Dr. Boyd, M.P.; and 76 Deputy Lieutenants, Magistrates, and Clergy. The following extracts are selected from this important document:—

"We, the undersigned inhabitants of the counties adjoining Lough Neagh and the Lower Bann, feeling deeply the frightful calamities with which this country is threatened from the great failure of the potato crop, and considering that in emergencies like the present it is the duty of every man to aid in preventing those terrible evils which follow in the train of a scarcity of food, beg leave most respectfully to submit to your Excellency that one of the best means of relief will be full employment for the labouring population, during the next spring and summer, in works of permanent and practical utility. Of these by far the most important in Ireland is the keeping of Lough Neagh at summer level, and improving the navigations in connection with it."

Then, after detailing the circumstances relating to this district, as hereinbefore stated, the memorial concludes as follows—

"Should this suggestion (of a grant of half the navigation expenses) be adopted,

a mighty and lasting improvement would be effected in the North of Ireland, the health of the district materially improved, and a vast opportunity afforded for the employment of our labouring population, whose condition it would be frightful to contemplate, unless industrial measures of this sort are adopted."

In the spring of 1846, Lord Lurgan proceeded to London and succeeded in obtaining from Sir Robert Peel's Government a grant of half the cost of the Navigation Works on the Lower Bann, which was increased to two-thirds under the award to be referred to presently.

Mr. Macmahon's report was approved of by the Board of Works, and circulated amongst the proprietors. Public meetings were held in June, 1846, at Kilrea and Lurgan, before two of the commissioners, Col. Jones and Mr. Mulvany; and during the summer and autumn the assents of more than two-thirds of the proprietors were obtained.

The form of assent signed by each proprietor states that "I have assented and do assent as such proprietor to the execution of the works for the Drainage, and improvement by Drainage, of the lands, and the making and improving of the Navigation in connexion with such Drainage, within the said District, by the said Commissioners, pursuant to the provisions of the said Acts."

The leading proprietors who signed this assent were the Duke of Manchester; the Marquis of Hertford; the Earl of Charlemont; Lords O'Neill, Massareene, Lurgan, and Powerscourt; Count de Salis; Sir Edmond M'Naghten; Sir William Verner; Sir Hercules Pakenham; Right Hon. G. R. Dawson, &c.

The Board of Works announced all matters as complete, and the works were commenced.

They afforded immediate relief all through the district; materially lessened the pressure of the potato famine; and largely prevented the demoralization and panic arising under the melancholy circumstances: but the diversion to relief purposes delayed the execution of the works and largely increased the cost.

However, in 1859, after holding courts in the district for the purpose of hearing objections, not one of any importance was made, and on the 4th of April the Commissioners (Sir Richard Griffith and Colonel McKerlie) signed the final award; thus closing the capital account and transferring, for maintenance purposes, all the powers of the Board to three sets of Trustees, as described at page 22. Mr. Macmahon's estimate for Drainage and Navigation was £195,714 4s. 5d.; the actual cost was £262,867 13s. 10d., of which the proportion expended on Drainage was £158,423 3s. 6d., and on Navigation works £104,374 10s. 4d.

Apportionment of Expenditure on Drainage, &c., Works.—The lands to be drained or improved were stated to be 26,000 acres, and the increase in the average present value was said to be £9,622 12s. 10d., for which the proprietors were to pay £110,000 (in forty-four half-yearly instalments, including four per cent. inte-

rest); the counties of Antrim and Derry were charged £8,513 14s. for new bridges and other county works, and the balance (£39,909 9s. 6d.) was remitted.

Apportionment of Expenditure on Navigation Works.—The counties were charged £37,137 10s., and the balance (£67,237) was a free gift from the Treasury.

From the above it will be seen that the total amount of Government grants for both purposes was £107,146 9s. 6d.

The Royal Commissioners* have overlooked the fact that, under the award of 1859, the Lower Bann Navigation Trustees are bound to clear out the whole bed of the River at the expense of the ratepayers, for the relief of the floods, just as the Drainage Trustees are bound to keep the Upper Bann in good condition for navigation purposes, at the expense of the owners of lands. In the Drainage Schedule they recommend that the Lower Bann Trust be dissolved, and all the works, with the entire control of the River, should be transferred to the Drainage Trustees with ample powers of local taxation, to be dealt with solely in the interest of the drainage of the country. But the powers of local taxation possessed by the Drainage Trustees are available only against the owners of lands set out in the Drainage Schedule. It would be a manifest injustice to transfer a tax, which they are bound to pay, from the ratepayers of Antrim and Derry to the shoulders of the proprietors of drained lands all around Lough Neagh.

Again, who is to be at the cost of the last eighteen years' neglect, amounting to a sum of £15,000 or £20,000?

Moreover the Commissioners make no suggestions as to how the Fisheries are to be dealt with.

In the Ballinamore and Ballyconnell Canal case, the Commissioners recommend that the Canal be handed over to the Drainage Trustees, and preserved as a drainage work only, with the obligation that the banks of the Canal and the masonry of them be maintained in good repair. Why not recommend a similar stipulation in the case of the Lower Bann, when the town of Coleraine is expending thousands of pounds in extending the navigation of the Bann to the sea?

The waterways throughout Ulster are improving. The proprietors of lands all about Lough Neagh petitioned the Board of Works to carry out the two-fold scheme of Drainage and Navigation. The Board said that both *Drainage and Navigation were inseparably connected* in the case of the Bann. Mr. Macmahon says the same in his report. Four-fifths of the proprietors of flooded lands, after reading his report, signed assents in favour of the double measure. On the faith of this very large preponderance of

* *Vide* pages 1 and 2.

feeling and opinion the Treasury have dealt with a liberal hand, and given to the district more than £100,000, all of which has been spent in the valley of the Lower Bann.

No further legislation is needed. But the Lower Bann should as soon as possible be put in a position to relieve the increasing flow of water in the time of floods, produced by the more rapid discharge of water owing to improved agriculture.

A loan from the Treasury might be obtained to assist the Counties of Antrim and Derry to pull up lee-way. A grant might also be asked for that a freer discharge of water might be secured than what was deemed necessary forty years ago.

The seaports of Derry, Coleraine, Larne, Cannickfergus, Belfast and Newry, are rapidly improving, as also are the inland towns of Lisburn, Lurgan, Banbridge, Portadown, Armagh and Dungannon, all in connection with or in proximity to the navigable ways of Lough Neagh. It behoves the merchants and traders of these cities and towns to rouse themselves and prevent the destruction of the Ulster Canal and the Lower Bann.

The towns of Lurgan and Portadown are constantly complaining of the Railway monopoly.

Blackwater town was once the port of Armagh, and now that manufactures are springing up at the adjoining town of Benburb, and the estate is in the hands of an enterprising and successful Belfast merchant, there is no reason why Armagh should not have a second string to its bow.

The tenant farmers of Derry and Antrim will stand much in their own light if they allow the Navigation of the Lower Bann to go to decay. One penny in the pound will raise £1,800 a year for the Lower Bann Navigation Trustees. Would it be fair to lose the navigation and treble the maintenance rate on the overburdened landlords of the district?

Again, the safety and progress of Portadown demand that the floods should be abated. Who is to pay the cost?

In reply to the deputation* introduced by Sir Thomas McClure, His Excellency is reported to have said:†—"We are quite prepared to consider the report of the Royal Commission; but having communicated with the two bodies most interested in the question—namely, the grand juries of Antrim and Derry—we have received a similar answer from both, namely, that 'they are not prepared at present to consent to the proposals which the Royal Commissioners have recommended.'"

In reply to the deputation of the Lough Neagh Drainage Trustees, His Excellency is reported to have said:‡—"What seems to me to be very-desirable, and I should be very glad to forward it,

* Vide page 16.

† Vide page 19.

‡ Vide page 28.

is that all local bodies and those that are trustees should be brought together and come to some arrangement as to what scheme should be adopted for carrying out these changes. . . . If between this and autumn inquiry should tend to bring about some union of local bodies as to what should be done, I think it would be very important, and the government would be very happy indeed to help you in every way they can."

These remarks of His Excellency have induced me to present, in a handy form, observations made by men who look at the whole question from very different aspects, so that the public may have an opportunity of considering a matter of such considerable importance in every light, and give their aid towards supplying His Excellency with such information as may enable him to reach the best solution of a difficult problem.

JOHN HANCOCK.

23rd June, 1883.

APPENDIX A.

TABLE OF HEIGHT OF WATER AT TOOME LOCK, AND OF
RAINFALL AT ARMAGH.

Year	Level of Lough Neagh at Upper Sill, Toome Lock		Rainfall at the Royal Observatory, Armagh	Year	Level of Lough Neagh at Upper Sill, Toome Lock		Rainfall at the Royal Observatory, Armagh
	Highest	Lowest			Highest	Lowest	
1853	14 6	8 1		1868	10 6	7 0	35.27
1854	11 3	8 6		1869	10 9	7 1	28.64
1855	10 5	7 10		1870	11 0	7 0	22.29
1856	9 7	7 7		1871	10 11	7 6	28.40
1857	10 2	7 5		1872	12 6	7 9	39.66
1858	9 10	7 8		1873	12 7	7 5	26.67
1859	10 1	7 4	33.29	1874	11 0	7 4	28.47
1860	11 2	7 11	36.56	1875	11 10	7 5	34.54
1861	10 5	7 7	42.93	1876	11 6	7 2	33.32
1862	11 2	7 10	42.11	1877	14 0	7 9	37.94
1863	10 6	7 8	37.16	1878	11 4	7 3	28.59
1864	10 6	7 4	34.02	1879	10 4	7 6	32.26
1865	10 11	7 2	38.83	1880	9 6	7 6	32.65
1866	11 5	7 5	40.41	1881	10 4	7 9	31.43
1867	12 2	7 8	36.96	1882	10 11	7 11	37.81

W. J. O'NEILL, C.E., *Engineer to Lough Neagh Drainage Trustees*

