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THE

IRISH QUESTION.

Translated from the French,

BY

JOHN P. LEONARD.

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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.

This able statement of the Irish question, published to-day in Paris, is from the pen of a writer who has already rendered important service to our country. I have (with the author's permission) lost no time in translating it, certain that every Irishman will read with pleasure a defence of the cause of Ireland, which is destined to make a most favourable impression in France and throughout Europe.

J. P. L.

Paris,

June 16, 1860.

Houses of the Oireachtas

DEDICATION.

MY DEAR JOHN BULL,

It is a marked feature in your oratorical habits to profess the most lively sympathy for suffering peoples. You are always ready to encourage revolt, when it does not break out in your own dominions; and every struggle for national independence—provided it does not attack British authority—meets with your most enthusiastic admiration. You are just now getting up subscriptions for Garibaldi.

What am I to think of such liberal demonstrations? Some people there are who pretend that, when you affect to be touched by the sufferings of a nation, and that you cry out Bravo! to a revolution, it is less from noble feeling and generous sympathy, than from cold calculation, and a keen and prudent attention to your own interests.

On the other hand, I know well your answer to whomsoever should make any allusion to the Indians whom you blew from the cannon's mouth, or the Ionians, whose annexation to Greece you refuse. With that bold assurance which characterises you, you would say: "Rash and unthinking are those who do not appreciate the blessings of British civilization!"

Has not one of your lords declared that Great Britain is the beacon-light of nations—the great luminary and safeguard of the world?

Well, however this may be, I "take you at your word". You admit that a people badly governed have a right to ask for reforms, and to dispose of themselves as they think proper. This is all I want: and having set it down as an axiom, I come now, in a friendly way, to speak to you of a people having far greater claims on your interest and attention, than the Hungarians, the Poles, the Lombards, the Romans, the Sicilians, or the Neapolitans.

It is, in fact, on the Irish people that I mean to have a conversation with you. Do not protest at

once. . . . You will, I hope, allow me, were it only for my own instruction, to study the blessings of British civilization in Ireland. Wherever the beacon-light of the world shines, have I not a right, and is it not even a duty for me, to enlighten myself?

Then if perchance there happens to exist for that country some trifling or serious reform that can be obtained, will you not be delighted to have me draw your attention to that neglected portion of the "United Kingdom"?

Those are services that friends are bound to render to each other. Friendship has its obligations, as a classical writer of my country says:

"Un veritable ami, toujours dur inflexible
Sur vos fautes jamais ne vous laisse paisible".

So, to you, for this reason, is due the dedication of those pages.

Your frank neighbour,

JEAN DE PARIS.

Paris,

June, 10, 1860.

Houses of the Oireachtas

THE IRISH QUESTION.

IN England the very existence of an Irish question will be disputed. It is now assumed in official speeches, and the British press agree on the fact, that, owing to the enlightened and generous care of the English government, Ireland is at present in the enjoyment of great prosperity. With fewer Irishmen in Ireland, we are gravely told the country is more happy; and they add: This is the advantage, and a most providential effect, of the famine and of emigration. From this it is evident that we may expect from the British press a sharp reprimand. We shall even be taxed with "ignorance"; *that* being the polite treatment every Frenchman receives who dares to speak of English affairs otherwise than in trumpeting their praise. Such an anticipation shall not, however, prevent us from proceeding. Notwithstanding all the confidence with which the official language of England inspires us, and the statements of the British journals, we have some reason to doubt that the people of Ireland are quite contented, and that the country is really prosperous.

For instance, people die of hunger in this "happy" country; and this is not a story of the past, one of yesterday; it is the fact of to-day. For even now, as fourteen and fifteen years ago, the sorrowing wail of misery, the cry of anguish, rings in our ears; accounts reach us of the population

of entire villages being reduced to such a state of wretchedness that they are begging for food, asking for "boiled turnips and a little salt" to support life; that some are forced to feed on sea weed, and others are actually perishing in the pangs of hunger. These scenes of sorrow are to be witnessed in the county of Mayo, in the county of Kerry,* on the sea coast, and in the mountainous districts of the West. Yes, famine reigns once more in that prosperous Ireland! Strange indeed! Why, has not this country actually the happiness of being governed by those who call themselves our masters in the science of political economy? England should surely know admirably well how to give Ireland a real and not a lying prosperity. And yet, "if in our times that monster of barbarous ages, Famine, seeks for a prey in Europe, it is by a singular fatality Ireland alone that it chooses".

Other symptoms also have attracted our attention. Less than two years ago, the British government was forced to put down in that happy Ireland a certain conspiracy of a secret society called "The Phenix Society"; a mere blaze, no doubt, but a blaze which apparently caused England a moment of uneasiness; moreover, the spark which set fire to it came, if we are not deceived, from North America, which the *Times* sees already principally peopled by the descendants of Irish emigrants, the future avengers of their ancestors.

Another thing which struck us was the enthusiasm with which the great deeds accomplished in Italy by our generals and soldiers have been cele-

* At Killarney.

brated in Ireland. Certain names of Irish origin excited in the country manifestations, which, to spare the susceptibility of our neighbours, we shall consent to consider of little importance. But in fact was not an illustrious Marshal of France hailed in Ireland under the royal name of *Patrick the First*? Is this fancy of theirs a compliment to England?

We have further remarked that the British government refuses to authorize the organization of National Rifle Brigades *in Ireland*, such as have been forming all through *England*. Does the recollection of the Irish Volunteers of 1782, who won their country's independence, still inspire fear?

Another significative fact, *emigration begins anew* in the most unexpected proportions. Is it because they find themselves *too happy* that so many Irishmen leave their country?

And then again, a solemn Petition, supported by sound reasoning and good motives, in which Ireland claims its Legislative Independence, receives at this moment thousands of signatures. It may be affirmed that the whole Irish people adhere to it heart and soul, and that it will reach London with all the authority of a vote of Universal suffrage.

These it seems to us are alone sufficient reasons to justify the inquiry we enter into here.

And now with the permission of our neighbours, let us go into "the question".

I.

Let us see what Ireland is, or rather what

nature made her, before examining what England has transformed her into.

Ireland, like Sicily, is one of the most richly endowed lands of this Earth. A soil eminently fertile, a temperate climate, a situation admirably adapted for commerce, abundant mineral resources; a brave and intelligent population, naturally honest, affable, and benevolent in manners, enterprising by character, gifted with a lively imagination, a witty, cheerful, and expansive gaiety. These are the prominent features of the country, and character of the people of that Ireland, whose name, by some fatal error of fate, has become synonymous with Famine-Land!

Ireland is the first country touched or sighted by vessels coming from the great western world, America. It offers them spacious harbours, safer and more convenient than those of England, for neither London nor Liverpool could compete with the Irish ports, already famed in the time of Tacitus. If Man had been as just towards Ireland, as Nature has been prodigal, what ships from all parts of the world, what active commerce, would fill with life her numerous harbours! What splendid sights would the bays of Dublin, Bantry, Galway, Waterford, Belfast, Cork—the natural point of communication with Australia—present! What traffic on the canals, and on so many lovely rivers! What activity, what industry, what life, in all those villages, silent and in ruins to-day! What riches would be extracted from the soil; what manufactures raised up by national capital, would attest the genius and the energy of that unfor-

fortunate race, prosperous in every land to which the blast of misery carries them—prosperous everywhere, in fact, except in their own country!

Of the different branches of commerce and manufacture which contribute to England's prosperity, which are those that Ireland would not possess? We could name some in which the Irish, by their peculiar faculties, by their natural taste and imagination, and by their artistic talent, would excel assuredly. How different would be, in fine, that Ireland from the one now known to us only by its misfortunes! What animation would then reign everywhere; what joy would resound on those shores, where tears only are shed to-day—on those mountains where people perish of hunger! What gladsome scenes would be reflected on the bosom of the lovely lakes of free and prosperous Ireland!

Perhaps we shall be reproached with indulging in poetical fancies. Let it be remembered, however, that a slight sketch of that picture of prosperity was seen during the short period of Irish independence, from 1782 to 1798, when Ireland possessed only the mere shadow of a national parliament.

But leaving aside the dream of the past, or ambitious views for the future, let us return to the realities of the present.

Here are figures and facts of the present time.

II.

Ireland has a greater extent of territory, has a more numerous population, gives the state a larger

income, than many of the second-rate powers of Europe. Before the great famines of 1846-51, in spite of those of 1817, 1823, 1831, 1837, and we may say, in spite of the *permanent* famine which reigns since 1800 (the date of the definite union with England), Ireland had *over eight millions of inhabitants*. We shall prove that it is not by *her* fault that there remains to-day *less than six millions*.

While the famine was raging, in that one year 1847—in which Ireland lost, by hunger or by the typhus fever the famine caused, five hundred thousand of her children, and in which two hundred thousand others fled from her shores—the agricultural produce of Ireland had been computed at near forty-four millions sterling—1,100 millions of francs. So that in that very year, Ireland, reduced to starvation, actually produced enough to feed and clothe double the number of its inhabitants. Economists have calculated that, if well cultivated, the country could easily supply the wants of a population of twenty-five millions.*

Let us now see what share Ireland has in the budget of the United Kingdom:—

Independent of many other liabilities of which we shall speak hereafter, this country, poor as it is, pays into the British treasury (according to the official documents of 1859), a sum of about seven

* We read, even in a work considered as official authority, *The Parliamentary Gazetteer of Ireland*: “The annual value of the agricultural produce of Ireland seems to be pronounced by nearly all parties only one-half, some say a fifth part, of what it is capable of giving”—*Introduct.*, page 69.

millions sterling (175 millions of francs).” But is this sum the real and exact one? It is only composed of the taxes received in Ireland. Is it not just also to count the duties paid in England on articles which are consumed in Ireland? For, in reality, it is on Ireland that the weight of those taxes falls. Minute examinations of the documents show that there is here an evident omission, an important one; and it is not to over-rate it, to set down at ten millions sterling (250 millions of francs), or rather indeed at *twelve* millions sterling, the total tax that Ireland pays in reality to the British treasury.

Let us, however, return to the official sum, stated to be *seven* millions. How is it applied to Ireland? We find placed to the account of that country, in the chapter of expenses, two millions and a half (63 millions of francs) for the army. That army, it is useless to observe, is not an Irish army; it is the army of the “United Kingdom”, of which, it is well known, the Irish constitute the main reliance. So that not only with her money, but also with her blood, does Ireland contribute in a very large proportion to the maintenance and security of the British Empire. A reflection here presents itself naturally. With her sixty-three millions of francs, Ireland independent might, if she wished to do so, have, on a peace footing, a national army of about seventy thousand men.

We discover further, under the title of “*divers expenses*”, a sum of one million and a half. Then there is the “proportional” share of Ireland in the national debt; a most flagrant injustice, which

John Bull himself would be forced to acknowledge, if, going back to the time of the Union in 1800, we had leisure to remind him of that curious story. In short, after having set down to the account of Ireland several other sums for her contribution towards certain British expenses, the official document was not able to bring the outlay up to the amount of the receipts. Of the seven millions that poor Ireland pays, there is one million sterling (twenty-five millions of francs) in her favour; a sum which Great Britain does not disdain taking to her own credit! But we have shown that it is from 250 to 300 millions of francs, and not 175, that the British treasury receives from Ireland: from which it follows, that the latter country makes to her richer "sister" every year, a gratuitous gift of about 125 millions.

Are there no public works to be undertaken in Ireland? Could not the surplus of the income of this unhappy country receive profitably a thousand useful applications?

Ireland giving alms to England! Does it not look like the world upset? We hope, however, to show that *such is the exact function of Ireland.*

III.

We merely alluded just now to the prosperity which Ireland enjoyed from 1782 to 1798, during the period of its partial independence. This fact is sufficiently important to be considered. O'Connell proved it fully in the famous discussion on the Repeal of the Union, brought about by him in

1843 in the municipal corporation of Dublin. We shall borrow from him only three or four observations.

Pitt, proposing in the British parliament the Union of Ireland with England, was obliged to acknowledge that the former country had suddenly achieved great progress, and so he had recourse to the following argument: "If Ireland", said he, "has become so prosperous under her parliament, we may calculate that her prosperity will increase three-fold under a British legislature". This statement, recalled by O'Connell before the citizens of Dublin, several of whom were old enough to be able to draw comparisons between the two epochs, appeared to them so audacious, that they laughed and considered it merely in the light of a mere happy flourish of eloquence on the part of the orator (*une ingénieuse gasconnade*). But had not a member of the municipality himself, so far back as 1810, observed with sorrow the opposite effects of the two "*regimes*"? Speaking of the time when the country had its national independence, he said, "Our rights were recovered, and how soon afterwards, indeed as if by magic, plenty smiled on us, and we soon became prosperous and happy". But he said also, "We have returned, alas! to what we were before 1782". Most positive statements made by bankers and merchants in Dublin, dated December, 1798, and January, 1799, prove also "the wonderful increase of commerce and industry in Ireland" under her National Parliament. In a speech pronounced in 1798, Lord Clare (Lord Chancellor of Ireland since 1789)

made the following declaration: "There is not a nation on the face of the habitable globe which has advanced in cultivation, in agriculture, in manufactures, with the same rapidity, in the same period, as Ireland from 1789 to 1798".

Moreover, statistics prove, that during these years of independence, the national consumption increased in Ireland in greater proportion than in England, and that on the contrary it became less after the Union.

And yet, it must not be forgotten that this parliament, which sat in Dublin, was far from representing the interests and real sentiments of the nation.* How it sold Irish independence for places, honours, titles, and bribes, secretly promised and shamelessly paid by Lord Cornwallis and Lord Castlereagh, is but too well known.

IV.

Such are the natural capacities of Ireland. From what she did with them during her short period of comparative freedom and under conditions scarcely favourable, we may judge for what an honourable and distinguished rank among western nations nature destined her.

But what has England done with that Ireland, which she has held in her hands, for so many centuries? That is what we shall now examine,

* It is well known that the Catholics were far from being rejoiced at this epoch in the history of their political rights, for they were as fully excluded from the Irish as they had been from the English Parliament.

with the assistance of that beacon-light of "liberal institutions", which she pretends she has set up for the world.

V.

It would be painful for us to go back through the course of ages, and follow in the pages of history, the trace of the blood and tears of unfortunate Ireland. Who does not know that long series of violence, of massacres, of confiscation and plunder—of every sort of perfidy, of tyrannical and sanguinary oppression! Shall we remind our readers, for instance, of what Protestant historians themselves have said of the conduct of the conquerors of Ireland about the sixteenth century? "By their horrible excesses the English purchased the curse of God and man". So one of those historians writes.*

These atrocities have remained to this day engraven on the hearts of the Irish. So much so, that during the late insurrection in India, when cruelties were falsely imputed to the Indians, it occurred to the Irish, by way of retort, to narrate the *too real* atrocities accomplished in Ireland by "*the Saxon Sepoys*". The heart-rending scenes during the famine would have, however, sufficed to remind them of the report which was one day made to Queen Elizabeth,—“Little was left in Ireland for her Majesty to reign over but ashes and carcasses”. They had seen verified to the letter in our own days the descriptions given by historians of those

* Leland. Book 2, chap. 3.

remote times, and witnessed the frightful sight of a whole people perishing of hunger on a soil which had produced the most bountiful harvests.

“Notwithstanding that the country was most rich and plentiful, full of corne and cattel, yet, ere one year and a half, they were brought to such wretchedness as that any stony heart would rue the same. Out of every corner of the woods and glynns, they came creeping forth upon their hands, for their legs could not bear them; they looked like anatomies of death; they spake like ghosts crying out of their graves; they did eat the dead carrions, happily where they could find them; in shorte space was none almost left, and a most populous and plentiful countrey was suddainlie left voyde of man and beast”—*Spenser's State of Ireland*, p. 165.

Witnessing what passed under the reign of Victoria, might not the Irish believe themselves carried back to the reign of Elizabeth?

Under the latter queen, however, there were not less than sixty Irish insurrections. It is true that if they broke out naturally from the wish of the inhabitants to get rid of so much oppression, they were also excited by the English themselves, who sought for new opportunities of plunder and confiscations.

Crushed down again under Cromwell for its fidelity to the royal cause, ravaged, inundated in blood, Ireland found itself again treated as a rebel nation by William the Third. In fact the nine-tenths of its land were confiscated to the profit of Protestant strangers!

Long was she oppressed under those too famous and terrible "Penal Laws", a monument of shame for the nation that made them. The "Infernal Code" governed Ireland until 1782. Under this cruel legislation the Catholic was the slave of the Protestant, and only became partly his equal in 1829.

Political and commercial tyranny, systematic oppression, unceasing religious persecution constitute the "*resumé*" of the régime which England for centuries imposed on the Irish, whom O'Connell so well named "The Martyr People".

All this is, no doubt, ancient history; but Ireland, who still suffers from it, has forgotten nothing; and we shall show that she is even forced *to-day* to remember it.

Has the policy of the British government with regard to her changed? In *form* it has; but in *substance* and reality, has it? Ah! you are a skilful man, John Bull! None know better than you do how to disguise under the external cloak of liberalism and philanthropy the plunder of nations and peoples, coldly calculated in the interest and for the greater glory of what you name with pride "British civilization". Your only excuse, it is said, is that the interest of the state, "*la raison d'état*", governs all your Irish policy. Let us study, then, that learned policy.

VI.

A conviction exists in the minds of enlightened Irish patriots which we find expressed in the following words by one of them:—"It is absolutely

essential to the existence of the British Empire that the Irish peasant class be kept in a condition which will make them entirely manageable—easy to be thinned out when they grow too numerous, and available *materiel* for armies”.

In other terms, it would be a duty for the English government to see that the Irish, at the same time that they provided for the food and luxury of England, should remain sufficiently miserable never to have the strength to shake off the yoke, and continue to furnish her with soldiers and workmen at a low rate. What is to be remarked here is, that the Irish writer who supports this argument makes neither complaint nor reproach. He simply adds—“Those who are of opinion that British civilization is a blessing and a light to lighten the world, will easily reconcile themselves to the needful condition. Those who deem it the most base and horrible tyranny that has ever scandalized the Earth, will probably wish that its indispensable prop, Ireland, were knocked from under it”.

This is an extreme opinion, and in a subdued form, a very serious accusation. How explain it? Unfortunately history, whose language is dispassionate, informs us, even by the testimony of Protestant writers, that the intention of the British Government, with regard to Ireland, has never been benevolent. Thus, the plan of Elizabeth was to colonize this country with good and loyal Protestants, and *to root out the mere Irish*. “The favourite object of the Irish governors and the British Parliament, was the utter extermination of all the Catholic inhabitants of Ireland,

which they swore to do; their estates were already marked out, and allotted to the conquerors, so that they and their posterity were consigned to inevitable ruin". (*Vide Leland, book 5, chap. iv.*) The form of the oath of the Orangemen runs thus: "I swear to be faithful to the king and to the government, and to exterminate as far as may be in my power the Catholics of Ireland".

Until the war of National Independence in America, the object of the British Legislature in Ireland, was to force the landlords, whether it was their wish or not, to oppress the farmers; as if it were not enough for Ireland to have been confiscated rather than conquered by foreigners in race and in religion! Among the conditions imposed by the government to those who received or undertook *plantations* or settlements in the kingdom of Ireland, was that of giving the culture of those lands to English or Scotch settlers. But the latter, little inclined to face the hostility of a people reduced to despair, required conditions too favourable, and it became necessary, in spite of everything, to have recourse to the Irish peasantry, who on their side accepted the hardest and most difficult. England in vain protested against this system, which was entirely contrary to the one she intended adopting. The historians of those confiscations are unceasing in their complaints about the rapacity of the companies of settlers, so deficient in "patriotic" spirit as not to prefer expensive English and Protestant tenants to Irish tenants who were to be had at a lower rate.

The plan of the government consequently failed. It obtained success in a certain measure only in Ulster, where Scotch tenants were introduced, so that to-day, if the majority of the gross population of that province are Catholics, the more wealthy farmers, as well as the landlords, are for the greater part Protestants.

But has modern England adopted such traditions? Does she carry out, in a different form, a similar policy? It is true, that after having confiscated the land and enslaved the Irish people, she endeavours to use (exploite) them in the measure and according to the nature of her present and new exigencies. This is what Irish patriots affirm. Has that opinion the slightest foundation? We thus have come down to contemporary facts.

VII.

What is the position at present of the Irish peasantry, whom past ages show us to have been systematically devoted to a complete extermination?

Is the odious legislation which condemned to death a whole people on the very land which was taken from them, still in vigour? Is the proprietor of the land in Ireland, always *forced* by law to oppress unto extinction the conquered race? Let us at once declare that he is not. But if the strict *obligation* of driving the Irishman from his farm exists no longer, the legal right or enablement is still in the hands of the landlord. In one word, the law no longer says "Thou *shalt*

evict"; but it still says, "Thou *mayest* evict"; and tradition adds: "By taking advantage of this right you will be meritorious in the eyes of Protestant England". That is why we so often read, even in the English papers, of so many *evictions* (that is the word)* taking place. The peasant or Irish tenant has *not*, then, ceased being at the mercy of his master. He is called "*tenant at will*", being at the caprice of the owner of the soil, or the "landlord". A tenant who *holds* nothing, alas! not even the house or the hut he himself built, and from which he may be at every moment driven without receiving compensation.

Had he wrought and developed in his farm the most costly improvements—had he spent on it not only his labour, but his savings—all he had in the world—his future prospects and those of his family—he might, from one moment to the other, even when he has paid his rent regularly, receive "notice to quit", and be forced to abandon everything without being paid back one single penny! It is the landlord who legally profits by all the improvements; *he* can send away, when he chooses it, his tenant, and owes him nothing!

This position of the Irish peasant, at the mercy of his landlord, cannot be compared to any other in the world. It has been a hundred times over proved, that the serfs of the middle ages, or the serfs of Russia in the present day, were treated infinitely better. The serf is, at least, *attached* to

* From the serious attention lately given to Ireland, the word *Eviction* has become French in its Irish sense. It will never go further than the language.—*Translator's note.*

the soil; it must feed him; he is not exposed to death by hunger while the land he tills grows a crop. In Ireland, the landlord has no legal duty to fulfil towards his tenant. Nothing prevents him from turning him away; that is, from condemning to death the peasant and his family. For, for those wretched people there is no other alternative but this, to *emigrate* (and to emigrate money is necessary), or to *die* by the road side; unless, indeed, that horrible prison which is called *Work House* should receive them, and reserve for them a more lingering death in mournful slavery!

The slaves of America themselves are less to be pitied than the "tenants at will" of Ireland. Life at least is assured to the Negro slave.

The condition of the Irish peasant is, then, without another example on the face of the globe. Civilized Europe offers nothing that even approaches it. It is said that the *Ryot* of India (another British subject) presents alone, but not in every respect, some analogy with the Irish tenant.

Who will be astonished that under such a system, in which the peasant is deprived of all security, the culture of the land should be so backward? who will be surprised that discouragement should weigh upon the minds of a whole population thus treated for centuries?

Englishmen often reproach the Irish with a certain "*nonchalance*", a tendency to laziness! Was there ever a more cruel reproach? What race of men would not have lost all their primitive energy under such a long and cruel injustice? And yet that Irish peasant, the worst fed, the

worst clad, and the worst housed in Europe—that man, who in his country, felt himself crushed down, degraded, powerless—see how he is transformed, and how he rises up, when he can fly from that land of oppression! He left his home in rags, insulted and despised! Behold, he has become, in America or in Australia, a prosperous farmer—an honest and independent workman! By his labour, by his economy, he will procure the means of delivering his relatives and his friends, whose thoughts are always turned to exile as towards their only hope and salvation.

It is estimated that fifty millions of francs, the savings of the expatriated Irish, are yearly sent from America alone, to pay the passage for new emigrants. It is by this means that the *Exodus* of Ireland is accomplished.

VIII.

That the truth of the foregoing remarks may be fully elucidated, we must enter into new details.

Perhaps people ask themselves, for instance, why the Irish peasant, driven away from the fields, does not go to the towns for means of existence? The answer is a very simple one: It is because there is little work and little industry in the Irish cities. Why? Because England has so decided it. She made laws, which lasted from 1699 to 1782, to prevent Ireland from having manufactures. The industrial prosperity of England reposes to a great extent on that enormous iniquity committed towards Ireland, and this latter country is so far behind her jealous mistress now,

that it will be henceforward impossible to compete with British industry, unless a complete change take place in the reciprocal position of the two countries.

The province of Ulster alone enjoys some commercial prosperity; and these are the circumstances to which is due that fact:—

When, under William the Third, the English parliament required the destruction of woollen manufactures in Ireland, it deigned to admit that it would be well to allow in that kingdom, the climate of which was favourable to it, the Linen Trade, which appeared not to be suited for England. French Protestants, after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, obtained concessions in Ulster, and took with them new improvements for the fabrication of Linen. In that province, as we have seen before, Scotch Protestant farmers had been induced to settle. These being better treated, naturally, than were (and are, even now) the Irish Catholic farmers, formed a middle class, possessing a little capital, by means of which the Linen Trade was developed—a trade which could not be kept up in any other part of the country. If the province of Ulster enjoys a relative prosperity, it owes it above all to the partial success of that policy which only aimed at replacing the Irish and Catholic population by an English and Protestant one. The former having been partly destroyed in Ulster, that province found itself nearly in the requisite conditions for prosperity.

Not however that Ulster is a paradise, with Protestant landlords and farmers. “Though there

Because
there is no
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is far more wealth diffused among the population of Ulster than in any other province of Ireland", writes to us one of the most distinguished men in Ireland, "yet the labourers and artizans and masses of the population are wretchedly poor; in Ulster also nearly all the great landlords are either habitually or occasionally absentees, and probably not one-fourth of the rents of Ulster are spent at home".

In fact that linen trade, the only one that the old policy of England tolerated in Ireland, has not to-day even attained a tenth part of the development which it might receive.

The absence of manufacturing labour explains the great obstinacy with which the Irish peasant gives himself up to field labour. A farm to cultivate is in fact the only chance of life for himself and his family. So, by excess of competition (as well as by the habits of luxury on the part of the landlord, and the avidity of his agents), the tenant is reduced to the necessity of accepting the farm at an exorbitant rent. He knows beforehand that of all it will produce, there will remain for him only potatoes of the worst kind, *lumpers*, which he will eat in common with his pig, if he has the happiness of possessing one.

To eat potatoes is the supreme ambition of the Irish farmer. If his landlord drives him away he has only to beg, to emigrate if he can, or to die of hunger.

IX.

It must already be evident that the misery of

the Irish peasant belongs to the nature of things, and that a simple law of any English parliament would not suffice to remedy such a deep-seated evil. And still we have not yet exhausted this essential part of The Irish Question.

Another point requires to be explained. Why should the landlord evict his farmer, if he were an honest man and a good workman? For a thousand reasons which he may set aside, but of which these are a few:—

We have seen that in former times the expulsion of the Irish farmer was *obligatory*, and that it is still legal. We may say that it has remained *meritorious*, according to the traditional policy of England towards Ireland. At least it is certain that a landlord, and even the most honourable one, will not hesitate in certain cases to employ a proceeding placed at his disposal, and sanctioned by custom.

So that whether it appear more advantageous to consolidate under one farmer a quantity of lands divided into little farms; or whether he prefer changing entirely his method of farming and turning his fields into pasture lands, which is to-day in Ireland the system in vogue—introducing cattle in the place of human beings, as it is said in some Irish documents—or that he simply wishes to bring on his estate more experienced farmers—Englishmen or Scotchmen; or further still, that he consider it as a service rendered to the state or to his party (not to say to himself), to procure tenants more docile at the elections, or Protestant peasants instead of Catholic ones; or again, that he should take it into his head, as Lord Derby did a few

months ago, to invest himself with the rights of a feudal lord, and to render justice in his own way upon his estate; in all those cases, as in many others in which he is guided by less worthy motives still, as when he wishes to confiscate legally what does not belong to him, the Irish landlord is at liberty to evict from his property the tenant at will, without having to think of what should become of the "*villein*" or his family. The law is in his favour, and he takes advantage of his right.

Still more; not only the law *exists* for the landlord, but even the government itself facilitates the exercise of it. There are, in the first place, at his disposal two functionaries who are called, one the *process-server*, and the other the "*driver*". The former depends on a tribunal on which a landlord himself sits as judge, and has for functions to signify to tenants the order of eviction. The function of the latter is to evict or *drive out* the unfortunate family. On the appointed day, women, old men, children, sick or otherwise, must abandon the cabin that the destroyers are preparing to raze. For the police constables are there armed with iron crow-bars to help the *driver*. This what is called the "*Crow-bar Brigade*"—a name which it received from popular indignation.

Ireland counts to-day an army of twelve thousand of these demolishers, who do not remain inactive; for the official statistics inform us that in ten years, from 1841 to 1851, they destroyed two hundred and sixty-nine thousand two hundred and fifty-three houses, or cabins, and that in one year (1849) they evicted fifty thousand families!

Those are the means employed in Ireland to execute the landlord law.

X.

But could not this law, which makes so many victims, which consecrates such flagrant injustice, and excites such deep-seated hatred, be modified by the English government?

It has always been promised, and was attempted *seventeen* times. At this very moment the eighteenth attempt at a law for the protection of tenants is being discussed in the House of Commons. What shall be the result? Even when it should have succeeded in the Parliament, what efficacious protection would it bring to the Irish peasant? What change would it make in his general condition? Moreover, the protestations already raised against this Bill do not allow us to hope much benefit from it. It seems already certain that if it passed into law its effects would be such that the position of tenants, far from being bettered, would only be aggravated.

However this may be, the past has nothing to give Ireland confidence; for up to this time British legislation has had only for its object to facilitate more and more, under pretext of "agricultural improvements", this sort of legal injustice: the expulsion of the tenant at will by the landlord. The formalities of the evictions have been simplified, and the expenses (which were only a few shillings however) have been reduced. In fine, nothing has been neglected "in order to extend the effects of a measure which had been found

satisfactory", as it is said in a statement drawn up in support of a law in the reign of George the Fourth. Even under the present reign, laws have been introduced to assist this system, which is the cause of so much suffering and exile.

It is true that it permits at the same time more cattle to be fattened, and that it rids the Irish farm establishment of a great number of human mouths, to the benefit of English consumption. Ireland is a utensil for the use and profit of England!

XI.

England, it is true, was always most attentive and preoccupied about a pretended surplus of Irish population. This anxiety on her part appears to be at the same time of a political and economical nature.

We have shown that in other times the British government openly pursued the following object: to extinguish Irish nationality, and to substitute instead English provincialism. Having but incompletely succeeded, it is important for it to see at least that the native Irish population does not attain in number and force a power capable of compromising the part assigned to Ireland by the calculations of England. Thus it was, when the powerful voice of O'Connell, who, however, would consent only to appeal to moral force, the Irish assembled in monster meetings; when the Hurrahs of eight millions of oppressed people were raised with formidable force in favour of the "*Repeal of the Union*", that is to say, the right for Ireland to live again with her own life, and to feed her own chil-

dren—England imagined nothing better in answer to these alarming demonstrations but the theory of “surplus population”.

In 1844, a commission was charged by the British Government to proceed to an important inquiry into the relations between landlord and tenant. It was of course composed of landlords; it established the existence of great misery and many abuses, but arrived to the following conclusions:—

“The Commission foresee that there would be some danger for the just rights of property, to grant in full *tenant right*”.

After having recommended as “absolutely necessary”, the consolidation of small farms, they added:

“Annexed will be found a statement proving that the consolidation of small farms under eight acres would necessitate the expulsion of 190,368 families (at least a million of people). The Commission consider that the remedy particularly applicable is emigration”.*

In 1847, a special committee of the House of Lords, resuming all the inquiries made previously, came to this fundamental conclusion, that it was necessary in one way or other to remove the excess of labour. The only difficulty was to know to what point of the globe this emigration should be directed, and the committee took information relative to the Colonies in North America, the East India islands, New South Wales,

* The report of this commission has ever since been considered as authority by the British Parliament. It was appealed to lately in the House of Commons in the discussion on the new Tenant Bill.

Port Phillip, Southern Australia, Van Diemen's Land, and New Zealand. It will be remarked that the first of those commissions had begun its labours a short time before the great famine, and the second when it existed in all its force.

Now, let the reader remember the statement we made in beginning, which was, That in the year 1845, which immediately preceded the famine year (and it was the same in the following years), Ireland produced enough to feed and clothe double the number of its inhabitants. Does not this single fact prove that a fixed, positive, preconceived, and systematic notion connected with the traditions of the ancient policy had alone inspired those parliamentary inquiries? If Ireland had to be governed for herself, and not only for the interests of England, would not the commission have discovered this palpable truth—that if they allowed the “surplus” population to consume the surplus of the produce of the country, the whole problem would be resolved. Famine should never have been spoken of in Ireland, and British lords would have been spared the trouble of deliberating whether it would be better to send a million of Irishmen to Newfoundland or to the antipodes.

But the fact is, that the potatoes having failed, and England not wishing to deprive herself of the Irish crops, the peasants died of hunger by thousands and hundreds of thousands, on the land which their labour had made fruitful!

The government had no longer need to take charge of emigration; it was produced as a ter-

rible consequence. The wretched peasants, driven away by misery and by the will of the dissatisfied landlords, rushed in crowds on board rotten vessels. Several of those rotten coffin-ships never saw shore again!

Thus it was how the British government got rid of the surplus of the Irish people, who were inconvenient in an economical, and alarming in a political, point of view. Thus it was, in the energetic language of an Irish patriot, that the English law helped the famine, and how the famine helped the English law.

XII.

The famine lasted five years, after which there were two millions of Irishmen less in Ireland, about a million and a half of whom died of hunger and plague; the others emigrated. This monstrous fact of a famine in the midst of abundance, requires to be brought fully to light.

Why, and how is it, people will say, that Ireland does not consume her own harvests? Why does she allow England to take them away? It is not Ireland that gives her harvests to England, it is England that takes them from her. The proceeding is a very simple one.

Ireland having neither money nor manufactures, is forced to pay in produce her rent to England. Is not all political, industrial, and even social life, centred in England? Is it not in England that the nine-tenths of the landlords of the Irish soil reside? In England that the price of the Irish harvests is spent? Poverty for Ireland, luxury for England!

England is, then, *necessarily* the market of Ireland. England *gives* nothing and *receives* all; Ireland gives *all* and receives *nothing*.

No, no! there is one produce, one single one, that Ireland may keep, the man who cultivates for the foreigner the land of his ancestors, has a right to—the *potato!* That is the part that British avarice and cupidity leave to him.

This is why the nineteenth century has witnessed, perhaps with not sufficient indignation, this unheard-of phenomenon—a kingdom whose people are dying of hunger, in the midst of a harvest sufficient to satisfy them twice over; a horrible famine, produced in a single country by a failure of the potato crop, which was felt in many other countries without producing this awful calamity (*cette suprême calamité*).

Famine! For sixty years it has been the régime of the Irish peasant. But no one can imagine what it was from 1846 to 1851. We shall not even attempt giving a picture of it. People died literally by the road-side and in their cabins. Entire families perished. The dead remained without sepulture; the parishes having no funds to pay for more coffins! The "*Poor Houses*" were crowded, and became hospitals in which typhus fever raged, and where the dying man lay struggling in the agonies of death on the same bed with the death-cold corpse. In the county of Mayo the most fortunate of the victims fed on their horses, asses, etc. It was, in fact, a sight to make modern Europe blush with shame before the middle ages and pagan antiquity!

And yet, as we have sufficiently explained it, there was never a real famine in Ireland; there were only legal murders and proscriptions. How often, under the influence of this conviction, did it happen that, while the famine raged, the coroner's jury, at an inquest on a man dead of hunger, pronounced a verdict of *Wilful murder* against the Prime Minister of England!

Six months had elapsed since the great famine had begun its ravages when the first succour arrived. All Europe, the Turks themselves, and America, sent alms to Ireland. Poor Ireland! reduced to receive charity! She, who for so many centuries, and at that very time, gave to her masters—to foreigners in fact—all her riches, her labour, and her life.

During these five sad years what has she received from England? Let us reckon. In the first place liberal alms from individuals, for generous souls are not wanting in England; next, as well in the way of state aid and credits for public works as in loans, of which she has had to repay a portion, ten millions sterling; then more Poor Law Acts,—sad present! for Poor Laws seem to have been made but to create poor and prisons for their use; lastly, a vast administration of public relief, a cloud of ten thousand functionaries, who administered everything, even foreign alms, and consumed a great part; of the public works undertaken, not one was really of use; and yet there are at present in Ireland four million acres of arable land to be improved.

As to the millions given or lent by England to

Ireland, let us not forget that every year Ireland furnishes to England, which makes no return, twenty millions sterling in value; that even during the famine years England received this enormous rent in cattle, in products of the Irish soil; in fine, that in reality it was wealthy England that even then was receiving alms from poor agonizing Ireland!

XIII.

Ireland made a beggar despite herself, has never asked for alms; she has never claimed but her right.

At the very moment when England begged for her in Europe and the New World, what did Ireland demand through the organ of her municipalities, by the voice of all her honourable and distinguished citizens—the restoration of the independence, of which she had been illegally despoiled half a century before. Like Hungary, whose heroes England was then applauding, she revindicated her nationality, she demanded her Peers and her Commons in her own capital; she begged they would allow her to govern herself, and to support herself.

And in reality if England wished to save Ireland, it was not money she should give her; she need only say quite simply, "*Ireland for the Irish*".

England would have been a loser in certain respects, a gainer in others, and on the whole she would have gained more than she lost.

Ireland independent instead of being poor and famished, would become all at once active, indus-

trious, prosperous, and in this prosperity of the neighbouring island, England would have found her own account.

Ireland independent would have abolished that revolting iniquity,—an official Protestant Church levying yearly, in a country seven-eighths Catholic, a revenue of fifteen millions of francs, holding also the churches, cathedrals, and all belonging to the ancient worship, the property of the poor, the endowments bequeathed by Catholics for Catholic objects. Is it not shameful to see an Anglican clergy supported at great expense by unfortunate Ireland, who has no need of it? A Bishop of Armagh, for instance, receiving annually, famine or no famine year, a salary of 14,664 pounds sterling, (366,600 francs); a Bishop of Derry, receiving the two-thirds of this sum; and ten other bishops with proportional incomes; without mentioning the ministers of so many parishes, which contain scarcely a single Protestant family.

Besides this, Ireland supports with her means, with voluntary contributions, her national religion, her own church and her schools; so that, poor as she is, she must provide two budgets for public worship. Had this enormity disappeared, England, in losing lucrative sinecures for younger sons, would have become no longer inferior to Turkey with regard to justice towards religious beliefs.

Ireland independent would have left to England her poor laws and their sad accessories. She would herself have willingly supported the wants of her own poor, the number of whom would be considerably diminished. She would have taken

from England those easy opportunities, of which that country does not fail to avail herself, of perpetrating without noise, under the cover of the *work-house*, an infinite number of little *Mortara affairs*. She would have rid England of the charitable care of sending back, and landing naked on her shores, old and infirm Irish people, who had worn out their lives in working in England for the English; for such is the system adopted and practised every day by philanthropic England.

Ireland independent, would have herself provided instruction for her children. She would have spared England the ridiculous and humiliating care which she takes to-day, in watching that in all the schools of the State in Ireland no allusion shall be made to Irish nationality, Catholicity, patriotism, or independence. For England exercises on the books given to Irish scholars a rigorous censorship. There must be in them no anti-English historical heresy. That no piece of eloquence emanating from an Irish orator, no national poetry, nothing in fact that could prevent the child from having an exclusive admiration for England, and for everything English, a well-advised censor considered it requisite to leave out of an edition, not entirely purified, a piece of verse entitled *The Downfall of Poland*, by Campbell. To pity Poland appeared to be dangerous in Ireland.

To-day it is English literature, the British press, and British fine arts, that absorb all the native talent of Ireland. The Celt has a quicker intellect, a more lively wit, and a richer imagination than the Saxon; but it is in the service and for

the glory of the Saxon that the Celt is forced to employ his brilliant faculties. The political press, for instance, is always anxious to secure the services of Irish pens, and it is to Irish pencils that are due the great number of those witty caricatures and comic drawings published in London. The satirical suits admirably the genius of this people, not less gifted for the highest order of eloquence. If she were not enslaved by England, Ireland would profit by all those precious services, and would inherit the honour of all those talents which belong to her. The foreigner should no longer impose his censure on the Irish schools, and the words "Country", "Independence", and "Liberty" could once more resound with glory on the golden harp of poetic Erin!

Ireland independent would have spared England also the painful necessity in which, from their own avowal, judges found themselves of "administering injustice" to the Irish tenants; they should also have been delighted to have no longer to pack juries in order to secure for themselves in political trials condemnation which the national conscience reproves. Moreover, England should not to-day, with regard to political amnesty, remain behind several states of Europe; behind France in particular.

Ireland independent would be armed, and not guarded by a foreign garrison. She should be no longer, as she constantly is, exposed to be placed under martial law, to which, in her case, are added the rigours which thirty-three different coercion acts have accumulated since the beginning

of the century. Her citizens should not be exposed to be condemned to two years' prison for having in their possession a suspicious looking pitchfork, and to transportation for having simulated military exercises. Irish volunteers would no longer be offensive to England, who will not at present allow them to be organised. A national army would be constituted in Ireland, which, without threatening England, would add to her force. England would, no doubt, have in her own army less of those Irishmen who in the Crimea and in India contributed to the honour of her flag; but in the time of common danger Ireland, reconciliated, would carry to her under her ancient banners the assistance of her brave battalions. Let England remember the exclamation of George the Second after the battle of Fontenoy. On learning the noble conduct of the Irish Brigade, which had so effectively contributed to the victory of the French, the king exclaimed: "Cursed be the laws that deprived me of such subjects!"

Ireland independent, would emigrate no longer; but England, at the same time, should not be anxious about the increase of a population that she would have ceased to oppress. Moreover, in the present state of things, the sudden decrease of the population of Ireland is, perhaps, not without some inconvenience for England herself, for, after all, she wants a certain number of arms to cultivate her soil. At this moment those arms go to seek, far from the country they love, work that shall not be paid for with misery. And England does, it appears, take alarm at this desertion *en masse*,

as she formerly did at the increasing numbers of O'Connell's audience. Her ilots escape with more precipitation and in greater proportions than she had desired. With an independent Ireland, all those different anxieties would be at an end, and would cease troubling England; the Irish, happy in recovering their country, would no longer cross the seas to found another. A people so deeply attached to fatherland would never condemn themselves willingly to exile.

XIV.

Exile! last vicissitude of martyred Ireland! At first her own mistress, prosperous and free, she takes rank among the most enlightened nations of Europe, and leaves in early times, in the history of Christian civilization, a luminous track. Suddenly, violence aided by treason, makes her the slave of the stranger. Since then her virtues have become the cause of her misfortune. Faithful to the creed of her fathers, she is persecuted by an apostate people. Faithful to the royalist cause, her people were massacred, her plains devastated by the regicide troops of Cromwell; and later still her blood was shed for the Catholic Stuarts. Deeply imbued with love for her own nationality, she saw that nationality in danger of being lost, and to punish her for a moment of independence, her own parliament was taken from her by a parliamentary nation. To-day, driven to despair by such an accumulation of oppression, of humilia-

tion, and anguish, her children, in spite of their love for her, are bidding her farewell!

O liberal England!

XV.

We have said what the happy results of a truly just and sincerely liberal policy should be for Great Britain as well as for Ireland.

Let England reflect on them! In the time in which we live it is no longer possible for a nation to retain another in servitude and suffering, without raising up against herself the indignation of the world. It is, above all, no longer possible to enjoy at the same time the benefit of oppression and the advantages of a reputation of liberality. The complaints of a people are heard to-day from one end of the earth to the other. Neither the loftiest mountain nor the murmuring noise of two seas can prevent the cry of anguish of nationalities from reaching generous ears. If a prince could have forgotten himself so far as to say one day: "*The Poles are as little deserving of our sympathy as the Irish*"* in Europe, fortunately, as a man of superior mind, Lord Macaulay acknowledged Ireland and Poland are universally considered as two sisters in misfortune. Great Britain may in vain throw between Ireland and us her majestic sha-

* This sentiment was expressed in 1847 (year of the Irish famine), by H. R. H. Prince Albert, husband of the Queen of England, in a letter to M. de Humboldt (vide Correspondence de A. Humboldt, Letter 132, p. 293, Translation of M. Max Sulzberger Bohnee, Paris, 1860).

dow, and trouble the air with her powerful voice, but the moans of Ireland shall be heard !

And when England will take the liberty of inspecting the dungeons of a king, that king can answer him: Turn back, and in Ireland see strewed about the bleached bones of thousands of human creatures, the dead of hunger, the victims of artificial famines ! Turn your eyes back once more, and behold those vessels carrying away an entire people, who renounce living under your philanthropic sceptre !

When England will call for on one side the secularization of an ecclesiastical government, and on another for privileges for Christians in a Mahometan country, Rome and Turkey will answer her: Look back, and see in Ireland that intolerable monstrosity, an Anglican clergy richly supported by the money of poor Catholic Ireland.

When England shall blame Austria for not giving back to Hungary her liberal institutions, Austria can answer: Let England give back to Ireland her independence and her parliament.

And Austria, as well as Turkey, Rome, and Naples, would be right.

In fact Ireland has rights quite as well-founded as those of Hungary, to revindicate her ancient institutions. In 1782 England solemnly recognized that the Irish Parliament was alone qualified to impose laws on Ireland. In 1800, that bond was torn without Ireland having ever authorised any one to yield up or sell her independence. The Legislative Union was not alone a flagrant illegality, it was also a deceit. Ireland did not obtain, nor

does she now possess, in the Parliament of the United Kingdom, the number of seats she has a right to have. With one hundred and five members in an assembly of six hundred and fifty-four, Ireland, it may be said, is not represented. As a consequence, the laws made in this parliament are made against her rather than for her.

The Union is, then, in reality, Ireland governed by foreigners, to her own prejudice, and for their profit only; it is Ireland forced to export what she should consume, and to import what she should fabricate; that is to say, condemned to periodical famines and perpetual misery.

The Repeal of the Union, it is the Irish government in Ireland; it is to have in Dublin not only a court, but a House of Lords and a House of Commons; that is, the residence of the proprietors of the soil, and consequently a rich society, which would bring back luxury and prosperity; it would be Ireland developing all her resources, creating for herself national industry, possessing a most important commerce, and feeding all her children. In one word, a nation recovering, with its liberty, the natural conditions of her existence and all the advantages of life.

England, who admits in Italy the rights of nationalities and the authority of universal suffrage, who applauds the insurrection of Sicily, and subscribes for Garibaldi, has no right to refuse the claims of Ireland.

And yet, Ireland can obtain nothing!.... We do not yet call for an intervention on the part of Europe, to get back for Ireland her own national

institutions. Europe cannot occupy itself with everything at the same time. But we believe that in no case friendly remonstrances and counsels would be more justified than in favour of this country, so badly treated, and which, in spite of her long misfortunes, possesses still a powerful vitality.

The cause of Ireland, more than that of any other country, deserves that Europe should apply to her, adopting them, these noble words:—
“L'interet de la France est partout ou il y a une cause juste et civilisatrice a faire prevaloir”.*

It may be that the political situation to-day is not favourable to the hopes of Ireland; but the time may come. Ireland has faith in it; Ireland expects it.

It is enough for us to have shown that there will be for Europe, when Europe wishes it, an IRISH QUESTION:

*Speech of the Emperor Napoleon the Third, at the opening of the Chambers, 1859.