Alexander Somerville, a Scot, first visited Ireland in 1843 and reported on atrocities by landlords in Co. Kilkenny, as a result of which the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel, established the Devon Commission to investigate relations between landlords and tenants, the mode of occupation of the land, cultivation of the land, the need for improvement and conditions and habits of the labouring class. He returned in 1847, the worst year of the famine, "sent from England by the proprietors of the Manchester Examiner, to travel through Ireland, to examine into its actual condition, without regard to political or religious parties, and to report to that paper what I saw". He subsequently published the letters as part of his The Whistler at the Plough (Manchester, 1852). The Irish section of this book was republished by Irish Academic Press in 1994, titled Letters from Ireland during the Famine of 1847.

Much is known about Somerville, as he was the author of a very readable autobiography, The Autobiography of a Working Man (1848). He was born in 1811, the eleventh child of very poor labouring parents living in a one-roomed hovel in Oldhamstocks, East Lothian. His schooling had to be delayed because his parents could not find adequate clothing for him, other than the rags he normally wore, resulting in mistreatment by the other children at school. At a young age he began a miscellany of occupations in agriculture and other labouring work, as farm helper, ploughboy, sawyer, limekiln labourer, stone breaker, sheep shearer, itinerant harvester, drainer, quarryman, and dock labourer. In 1828 he joined his brother in Edinburgh as a Sawyer, spending his leisure time reading, play-going and in political activity. In 1832, hard pressed for money, he enlisted in the Scots Greys.

He entered the regiment at a critical moment. He was stationed at Birmingham on the eve of the Reform riots, when a mob was expected to march on London. The soldiers were ordered to sharpen their swords to deal with the expected trouble. Somerville wrote a letter to the Weekly Dispatch stating that while the Scots Greys could be relied upon to put down disorderly conduct, they should never be ordered to lift up arms against the liberties of the country and peaceful demonstrations of the people. The inexperienced officer in charge, Major Wyndham, took this as a libel on the regiment, and Somerville was charged at an informal and hastily convened 'court martial' with a trumped-up offence, and was sentenced to a military flogging of two hundred lashes. After one hundred lashes, he was taken down in case he died, and in hospital afterwards said, "This shall be heard of yet; I shall make it as public over England as the newspapers can make it".

His case became front-page news, discussed in Parliament, referred to the King. The incident was officially investigated, and the regiment's officers were executed in public by indignant crowds. There were large popular demonstrations against flogging in the army. Major Wyndham received an official reprimand. Somerville became the hero of the reform movement, used for political ends, often against his inclinations. A public subscription was started for him. He met and was befriended by William Cobbett, who had written at length on conditions in Ireland, often in a tone similar to that later adopted by Somerville. Cobbett offered him advice on a career as a writer. In August, 1832, he purchased his release from the army, and returned to Edinburgh. His efforts to start a newspaper and then a shop were unsuccessful, so he joined the 'British Legion', serving with it for two years in Spain, involved in the grim warfare of 1835-37 on behalf of Queen Isabella against her uncle, Don Carlos. He received special commendations and was promoted to lieutenant before being invalidated out in 1837 with a bullet in his arm which he carried with him to the grave.

His politics were not of the more radical kind, and he became increasingly 'conservative' during his life - although his conservatism was of an idiosyncratic, humane and economically liberal kind, informed also by his Scottish covenanting background. In the 1830s he supported the transported Tolpuddle Martyrs, but berated trade union leaders for seizing on the Martyrs' cause in an opportunist way, which was not primarily concerned with the plight of the persecuted Dorset labourers. He condemned anti-combination laws, but criticised restrictions on entry practised by trade unions via apprenticeship, and the unions' secrecy. In 1837 he published his Narrative of the British Legion in Spain, an account of his military experience of the Spanish Civil War of 1835-7.

This was followed by his Warnings to the People on Street Warfare, attacking the 'instructions' issued by the revolutionary Colonel Francis Maceroni to the people on street warfare. Somerville argued for the futility of using violence in England to achieve political ends. He had returned in the autumn of 1837 with first-hand experience of the brutal savagery of war in Spain; and he was soon introduced to two members of a Chartist 'Secret Committee of War', as an experienced soldier 'who could give a practical opinion of the feasibility of their intended insurrection'. Somerville, a huge and powerfully built man himself, told the secret committee that he had seen, besides the horrors of bloodshed and death in battle, 'fertile fields trodden under the hoofs and wheels of the artillery ... vines cut down ... the houses of rich and poor ... of political and non-political inhabitants, battered to atoms'. In particular, he attacked what he called the 'absurd ... dangerous, warlike notions' of the Chartist Peter McDouall, pointing out that, unlike continental soldiers, British troops were unlikely to go over to the side of crowds, and that the army was a formidable force for civilians to confront.

He wrote to similar effect, in his Public and Personal Affairs, of how 'the agitation in the manufacturing districts is high enough for immediate action, and from a too well grounded discontent - but that agitation is not yet national, nor from the mingled indifference and opposition of the middle classes will it soon become general - therefore an armed movement must be delayed'. There were some who tried to persuade him to join the 'Welsh insurrection of
Anti-Corn Law League.

Letters from Ireland, historians of Chartism. Yet it is probable that his best these years that he has been remembered, mainly by

Letters from Ireland during the Famine of 1847, was supported by the Anti-Corn Law League to report on writing for the

literary work was his subsequent rural commentaries on

social and economic topics and their political ramifications,

somerville's views on English and Irish rural
discussion here was level-headed, accusatory and
dominant, but still analytical, always urgent. If Somerville

of the famine, it was at the doors of the larger

Irish landlords, regardless of their faith or politics.

he went beyond superficial allocation of blame -
outlining the structural problems of the Irish agrarian economy, dealing with the problems of entailed estates,
tenant right, inadequate leases and the disincentives for
tenants to improve land, the Irish poor law question,
dependency upon land, the considerable extent of
subletting, and the conacre and rundale systems. He made
detailed comparisons between the respective circum-
stances of Irish and English agriculture, and also discussed the reasons for the lack of Irish industrial development
compared to England. It is clear that he saw the causes of
the famine as lying in avoidable institutional, legal issues,
structural flaws rather than in the 'natural' (i.e. inevitable)
causes which were emphasised by many in 'responsible' positions as an excuse for inaction. Somerville's journalistic
skill, his literary and descriptive imagination, and his
sympathy for the Irish people produced a deeply humane account of the hardships suffered, their structural causes, and the inadequate attempts to relieve them.

After his work on Ireland he continued to write for
many years, but largely in another country. He emigrated
to Canada in 1858. Sadly, his wife died just eleven months
after his arrival there, although they left a number of
children who settled in America and Canada. Despite many
literary initiatives, his own fortunes did not improve. Late in
life he listed his writings, including his account of Ireland, and remarked that 'it will be seen that many of the subjects
are, unfortunately, such as an author may become poor upon, rather than popular and well remunerated'. His
earlier sympathetic attitude towards the Irish in the 1840s
seems to have taken some knocks following the Fenian
attack on Upper Canada in May, 1866, under General John
O'Neill, with the seizure of Fort Erie, and the attacks on
St. Armand and Frelighsburg. On these occasions he
defended the Upper Canadians, on the grounds that their
livelihoods and new homes were being threatened, and
that they were not themselves involved in the controversy in
Britain over Ireland.

Somerville died in 1885, aged seventy-four, in poverty in
a squalid boarding house in Toronto. For some years he
had been sleeping throughout the year in a woodshed
outside, with the snow in winter seeping through the
window. And it is certain that, all those years later, he had
not forgotten the deplorable scenes he had witnessed
during the famine: men like 'the phantom farmer, Thomas
Killaheef, near Newcastle, Co. Limerick, who had followed
him at one point, while on the Irish, were two 'spaced
children' had stood leaning on their long and narrow
spades, 'spades made for spectres to dig with'. Thomas
Killaheef 'said nothing, but looked - oh! such looks, and
thin jaws! ... The lean man looked as if his spirit, starved
in his own thin flesh, would leave him and take up its abode
with me. I even felt it going through me as if looking into
the innermost pores of my body for food to eat and for seed
oats. It moved through the veins with the blood, and
finding no seed oats there, nor food, searched through
every pocket to the bottom, and returned again and
searched the flesh and blood to the very heart; the poor
man all the while gazing at me as if to see what the lean
spirit might find; and it searched the more keenly that he
spoke not a word. Thomas Killahaee may have spoken not
a word, but Alexander Somerville wrote for him.

The police came under increasing pressure
as the famine worsened.

1839 - the Newport Rising - but he refused to become
involved. He also wrote critically of the Chartist Land Plan
in the Manchester Examiner, as he does on occasion in the
Letters from Ireland, basing his view on an assessment of the questionable viability of extremely small-scale peasant
holdings, as found in many parts of northern and western
pre-famine Ireland. Indeed, his criticism was such that two
historians have since referred to him as 'the vitriolic
Land Plan propagandist'.

It is for the part Somerville played in the troubles of these years that he has been remembered, mainly by historians of Chartism. Yet it is probable that his best literary work was his subsequent rural commentaries on Ireland, Scotland and England: devoting himself largely to
social and economic topics and their political ramifications,
writing for the Morning Chronicle and the Manchester Examiner, with a particular sympathy for the work of the
Anti-Corn Law League, The Whistler at the Plough, his
Letters from Ireland during the Famine of 1847, and his
Free Trade and the League were written around this time,
when his public influence was undoubtedly at its height.

A meeting with Richard Cobden, following letters
Somerville had published in the Morning Chronicle in 1842
on the Corn Laws, began his career as a rural writer. He
was supported by the Anti-Corn Law League to report on rural conditions. Known to the League's organisers as a
rather difficult fellow they called 'Reuben' - whose occasional drinking bouts they tolerated because of his
ingredient, skill, his literary and descriptive imagination, and his
sympathy for the Irish people produced a deeply humane account of the hardships suffered, their structural causes, and the inadequate attempts to relieve them.

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man all the while gazing at me as if to see what the lean
spirit might find; and it searched the more keenly that he
spoke not a word. Thomas Killahaee may have spoken not
a word, but Alexander Somerville wrote for him.
I had intended to write a letter, instead of this, from the county of Clare or Galway; but the snow-storm which enwraps the country and fills the atmosphere with smothering drift prevents me from getting further west for the present. And the state of the roads is already such as to render it doubtful if even this letter will reach Manchester in time for next Saturday's paper.

But there is no want of matter to write about here. Long before I reached this city I had matter enough, of the deepest interest, for a volume, instead of a column or two in a newspaper. The difficulty with me is to select the topics of most pressing interest, and postpone or leave untold what cannot be now published. To begin and continue to tell of all the ghastly faces, hollow and shrunken, which I have seen, with death looking out of the eyes, might horrify and appal the reader, but would not, I fear, instruct him; the masses of population amongst whom I have travelled through Tipperary and part of this county, sinking from health to sickness, from life to death - not yet dead, but more terrible to look upon and think upon than if they were dead; living, but with death and his attendants in possession of the human tenement, and keeping possession until the indwelling spirit of the clay is ejected, thrown out, out at the windows where it is already seen struggling to stay within, and glaring horribly upon the passer by; those masses of population would afford, in description, scope enough to fill all this paper, from title to printer's name. But the means of relieving them from present suffering and impending death are the topics which I shall rather choose.

On the subject of subscriptions to relief committees, a very few sentences shall at present suffice. Government doubles the subscriptions of private individuals, so that by a subscriber giving £50, the relief committee gets £100. The munificent contributions from England, and the government duplication of them, (the government being in that case only the dispensers of taxes paid chiefly by Englishmen who work, who take off their coats to work, and sweat with their coats off), these contributions are in many places the only dependence of the people for subsistence. In no place can I see, or ascertain by inquiry, that the nobility or landowning gentry are contributing, save in the most paltry sums; most of them giving nothing at all. A landlord who has nominally an income of £20,000 per annum, puts his name down, in the county of Cork, for £5. Another in Tipperary county, who either is rich or lives as if he were rich, puts his name down for £4. The town of Bridgewater in England alone has contributed for Irish relief above £1100 in the course of a few weeks. Its population is about 10,000. The population of Clonmel in Ireland is about 16,000. Its contributions to the relief fund are about £1000, being by far the most liberal of any town in Ireland according to the population. But with the single exception of Mr. Bianconi, the rich car proprietor, who gives £25, the 'Saxons' resident there, or the 'Celts' favourable to Saxon alliance, are the liberal contributors. The only titled or landed subscriber is the Earl of Clonmel, who gives £20. The millers, most of them, give £100 or £50 each, their daughters and sisters giving sums of £20 and £50, in addition to an endless stream of private beneficence. From a few shillings up to £5, but seldom more than 10s. is the range of the subscriptions of the shopkeepers, gentry, and anti-Saxon aldermen and town-councillors (Mr. Bianconi excepted) of Clonmel. And they have been making speeches, writing, and printing, and publishing all manner of anti-Saxonism, at least twice-a-week, up to last Saturday.

But, to pass to more comprehensive
and permanent measures of Irish relief, let me glance at the proposition to give sixteen millions sterling out of the imperial exchequer to make Irish railways. The people of Ireland and the landlords of Ireland must not be mistaken for their impeccability, splutter and explode in the face of every one who speaks or writes of their poverty stricken of them in this very season of famine, distress, and disorder, opposing the public benefit, and deferring the employment and payment of labourers to promote their own private ends - those very men standing up in parliament, demanding in the name of the people sixteen millions to help to make railways, while their own greediness mars the making of railways for which the money is already provided?

The line from Limerick to Waterford would have been employing several thousands of men at this moment, if the capital had been all subscribed. The government, seeing this, came forward to make up the deficiency of capital for the earth works, three weeks or a month ago. No man in England or Ireland knows that fact more clearly than Mr. Osborne. No man with the breath of life in him knows better than Mr. Osborne why this railway is not now going on, and why time and money are now being wasted in new surveys, while thousands of unemployed men, along the course of the line, are dependent on charity, and on government advances to relief committees, for subsistence. The public do not know the causes of that delay; I shall tell them one, at least, of the causes.

The line, as formerly surveyed and adopted, passed near the park walls of an important landowner in Tipperary; but it did not go through more than a few acres of his estate. The line by that course went in a straight direction, and through level meadows. The important landowner, either to get it to go through some miles of his property for the sake of the money to be paid for leave to do so, or because he thinks that a railway and the trains upon it shooting along the valley, (miserably bad taste if he thinks so!) in sight of his fine new park, would deteriorate the beauty of the scenery of the Suir river and the Waterford hills beyond - to please himself, in one or the other of these respects, or to effect some purpose equally unworthy, is endeavouring to turn the railway out of the straight line in the plain by the river side, to go round some miles of country, chiefly on his estate, in form of a crescent, part of that course being in deep cuttings. The additional expenses, by taking that erratic course instead of the even one, will be £10,000 for construction, besides the great expense now incurred for new surveys, and the great loss to the public from delay.

But his deviation of the line has a more serious disadvantage. The largest flour mills in Ireland, save perhaps one establishment, were to be served by the straight line. A station was to be made close to the mills. The owner of the mills, having beautiful private grounds sloping towards the river, was willing to have them encroached upon by the railway for the advantage of the station for business. That miller is rich enough to live without business; affluent enough to live, if he chose, in higher style than any landowner in the country; liberal enough to live, as he does, genteelly and beneficiently; yet he looks to the advantage of his business, which is the public advantage, and would allow the railway to cut up his pleasure grounds rather than it should not bring wheat to the mill and carry away its flour. Moreover, the station at the point would be a passenger station, and would induce many people to leave Clonmel and return again for pleasure, while by the deviation there will be no point of attraction whatever.

The important landlord, to serve his private purposes, takes, or tries to take, the railway accommodation from the public, and the large mills of the greatest employer of men and money in the neigh-

To produce food from oats, and barley, and rye, instead of potatoes, three acres of land will require to be sown instead of one acre of potatoes. Neither wheat nor turnips can be sown in any available quantity this year, from the deplorable misculture of the soil. Its wetness, foulness, and poverty, though much of it is naturally fertile, unfit it at present for wheat and turnips.

The land must be prepared in time nor at all, save in some limited and favoured districts, to sow grain. The horses are otherwise employed. The peasantry have neither numerical strength nor physical strength to prepare the land with the spade in the requisite time; no, not an eighth part of it, to produce corn enough to supply the place of the potatoes, though every man able to handle a spade began to delve tomorrow and delved until the month of June.

Wherefore, I, after observing closely, thinking anxiously, and making many calculations, declare my opinion to be, that if the sixteen millions sterling were now lying loose and without other uses, it would be the most mischievous thing for Ireland and which could only be to embark in extensive railway works with that money, while so vast a proportion of the land is untitled, with the horse labour employed otherwise than in tillage, and while the whole manual strength of the country is but fractional to the strength required to put crops in the ground.

Ennis, County Clare, 12th February 1847

Looking from this western county town, through the medium of notebooks and recollections, upon the counties journied over from the east and the south, the soil not lessening in fertility, the face of the country not declining in beauty, but the distress distilled, the life sinking to the west, (may it indicate the dawning of a brighter morrow!) and looking around me here on hungry Clare, a question arises as to the cause of Clare, Galway, Mayo, Roscommon, Sligo, and other grass-growing counties being so generally devoted to pastureage, giving no employment to the people. With that question before us, it may be interesting to take a general review of Irish agriculture; and it is as fit to take that review from this point as from anywhere else. Space need not be now occupied with lengthened descriptions of the people's sufferings. All that can be said of the peasantry of the west is comprised in the words, hoards, hunger, rags, rheumatics, weakness, sickness, death. With the exception of the gentry of the west is comprised in the words, castles, pride, idleness, improvidence, poverty, debt. There is hardly a middle condition or a middle class.

Until a period of time not yet reaching a hundred years, the surface of Ireland was almost exclusively devoted to pastureage. If the potato plant goes out of cultivation followed by famine, it came into cultivation preceded by famine. It was long after the introduction of the potato by Sir Walter Raleigh - it was not until three generations after his departure that this plant was cultivated for food. From Raleigh's time it had been preserved in the family garden and eaten at the family table of Sir Richard Blackwell, his grandfather having received some tubers from Raleigh. Blackwell, seeing the excessive privations to which the people were exposed by periodical recurrences of famine, urged the cultivation of the potato plant as a relief from famine.

In 1727 an unsuccessful attempt was made to introduce an act of parliament to compel landlords to till five acres out of every hundred, exclusive of mountain and bog, and to release tenants to the same extent from the penal covenants in their leases against tillage. In 1762 an act passed to grant bounties on corn brought by land to Dublin, which was not withdrawn until 1780. In 1764 the sum of £5,483 was paid as a bounty for this purpose. The sums increased annually until 1780, when the bounty for that year amounted to £77,800. The counties of Carlow, Kilkenny, Meath, Queen's, and Tipperary, received the largest share of these bounties.

There are about one and twenty millions of acres in Ireland, of which one third is not touched by spade or plough or the hand of man. Much of that third part is capable of being profitably cultivated. But a far larger proportion of the other two thirds is capable of being doubled, trebled, or quadrupled in its produce by the presence of money, labour, wages, and skilful direction, and the absence of entails, leases on lives, tenancies-at-will, and all the other evils which the Irish landlord is heir to. It is almost a universal custom throughout Ireland for the landlord to let the bare farm to a tenant to erect dwelling-places for himself and his beasts, at his own expense, according to his ability and taste. The ability being low, the taste is kept at the same level. It is also common, though not universal, for the landlords to get rid of a tenant by pulling down the house. There being always a keen competition for land, a farm can be readily relet to another tenant on condition of that other tenant rebuilding the house. The landlord having no expense to incumber is not particular about pulling down a house, or a dozen or a score of them. In all parts of the south and west of Ireland the wrecks of human habitations are seen, the roofs having been taken off to get the tenants out. A low state of morals is a consequence of wretched dwelling-places; wretched dwelling-places are the natural result of the tenant having no expense of the landowner to be the sole proprietor of the building. Leases used to be granted for 999 years upon the payment of a sum of money. In such a case the leaseholder is the real owner, but he cannot sell. He can only sub-let. The sub-tenant under him divides the property among a lower class of tenants. The law is such, that if the second tenant fails to pay his rent to the first tenant, though
third one, who is the occupier and cultivator, may have paid the rent to the second, the third can be seized upon for the default of the second, and all of his stock swept away.

If there be tenants of the first, second, and third degrees, with a head landlord over all, that head landlord recovers his rent from any one of the three. This system gives the landlords a better chance - at least they think so - of getting rent, than if they had only one tenant for the one farm. Therefore they encourage this pernicious system of sub-letting.

Another kind of lease not now granted, but still existing and to exist, is that of a lease on lives, renewable for ever by payment of a fine on the death of the lives named in the lease. The more common leases now are for sixty-one, thirty-one, and twenty-one years, with one or more lives added thereto. The lives are commonly those of neutral property. If the lives expire before the years expire first, the lease does not end until the persons named in it die. The hazard and uncertainty of this system cannot be otherwise than detrimental to agriculture; at all events, a good capital, exceeding the want of faith, his ever wakeful suspicion in his landlord and in the agents of his landlord. The most trustful and faithful of human beings is the Irishman when he is himself trusted, and has been convinced that he is trusted. This is no idle sentiment; it is capable of proof. Nor can I pass without denial the assertion that the Irish peasant is from choice the enemy of industry and the security of property and of human life. Look at the Quakers of Clonmel and of other towns in Tipperary who have large capitals invested in business, who employ Irishmen and pay their wages, in blood. I purchased a volume of songs from the Nation, and called the ‘Spirit of the Butchers’ Shop’ or the ‘Spirit of the Shambles’ it would have been more appropriately named. From beginning to end it presents the mind with no other idea than that of butchers whetting their knives to cut throats. There is no other sentiment in it. Even as to poetry, for which, according to the preface, the book has been praised by political opponents, I see but very little. The rhymes are harmonious and flow smoothly, but any versifier of talent might disembowel the dictionary and string its words together in such lines, just as easily as a butcher separates, lays together, and dresses raw tripe.

Ireland, rich in natural treasures under the earth and above the earth, richer in rivers to move machinery and to float ships than any other portion of the globe of the same length and breadth, and with an abundant population needing to work, seeking to work, and willing to work; only requires peace, and men of peace, with money and skill in their hands and in their heads. With these Ireland may have, will have, manufactures, commerce, wealth, wages, inward order, outward power, and landed estates productive and valuable. Since I wrote my last letter, dated at Limerick, I have stood upon the shores of the Shannon, have sailed upon, steamed upon, mused upon, and wondered at, this river’s mighty breadth and length and strength. Two hundred and thirty-five miles long, with a volume of running water
equal to the three largest rivers of England, the Thames, Trent, and Severn
united; swelling into lakes, four, five, and six miles wide; and from twenty to thirty
miles long, as if the Shannon spread
six miles wide, and from twenty to thirty
ships upon him; again gathering himself
to shew his strength, as if
awe inspired by its measureless power,
and the contemplation of what the
Almighty Maker made it for, is only
surpassed by the deeper awe arising from
the havoc, disorder, famine, and crime,
made by men who waste the fertile land
upon its shores, as well as its godlike gift
frowning Heaven, one of the noblest
to man.

made by men who waste the fertile land
of motive power
extracted, and remitted to him once a
territory on one side of it, an amiable
income £20,000 a-year; his acres three
times twenty thousand; his wretched
tenantry in misery at all times, dying of
best meaning of men, but born to entailed
misfortune of being a Lord with dignity
way of doing so, and only one way of
land and entailed beggary, with the
nobleman, naturally, I believe, one of the
emancipation of himself, the fertilizing of
so invested profitable; and let him
apply the money he receives to the
people unemployed now. When this is
called a town
exclusively his Lordship's own, and fulfil
may become a great town, though not
its share of that world which the mighty
Shannon is small, the capacity of the river
for trade is boundless.

England, the Thames, Trent, and Severn
united; swelling into lakes, four, five, and
miles long, as if the Shannon spread

I cannot let this letter go to England
without an account of the Shannon river
and its great lakes, on the shores of one of
which I now write. The trade of the
Shannon is small, the capacity of the river
for trade is boundless.

The navigation from Limerick to
Killaloe, owing to the rapids and falls of the river, is partly by canal and locks.
Including stoppages in the locks, the swift
passage-boats, drawn by three horses
each, the horses being changed every four
miles, do the distance in about two hours.

At Killaloe, which is ninety-two miles
from the sea, the steam navigation of the
upper Shannon begins and proceeds
upwards. Iron steam vessels were brought
in sections from Liverpool and put
together and launched here for the
navigation of the upper Shannon. That
which I took a passage with, the Lady
Lansdowne, was 90 horse power. Her fuel
was turf, and her engines required for six
hours' work 65 boxes of turf, each box
containing 20 cubic feet, each 20 feet of
the value of sixpence. The fuel for 90
horse power for six hours thus costs
£1.12.s.

This would be an inconvenient kind of
fuel for long voyages or for vessels of
heavy loading. The steamers on the upper
Shannon convey loads commonly by
acting as tugs to heavy barges.
The conveyance of passengers between the
canal at Killaloe and the canal at Shannon
harbour, a distance of thirty-seven miles,
is also a chief branch of their trade. The
vessels are commodious, well fitted up,
and the best cabin fares are only 5s. 10d.
for the whole distance of fifty-two miles
from Limerick.

Between Killaloe and Portumna, a
distance of twenty-three miles, the
Shannon is a lake, known as Lough Derg.
Deep and broad, with islands, headlands,
creeks, and tributary rivers, the lake
extends back into the rivers, farther
than can be seen from the ship's deck.
Lough Derg is delightful to look upon and
to簿 upon. Its beauty is enhanced by
the shores of Munster on one side and of
Connacht on the other, make one feel as
if heaven had descended in the olden time
to separate men who loved strife and
made their country poor by their strife,
and held out to them the beneficence of
nature to make themselves rich, and still
stood, still holding out the gift which they,
in the strife of creeds and factiousness of
politics, still neglected. The existence
of steam packets on the lake may seem
to disprove the inference here drawn, that
the dwellers on the shore neglect the
resources of the Shannon river. Those
steamers do not derive much of their trade
from the shores of Lough Derg. Tourists
in search of health and convenience from
distant places; passengers travelling
between Dublin and Limerick by the
Grand Canal, which joins the Shannon,
seventy-nine miles from Dublin; military
stores and troops; corn and provisions
between market towns; and, at present,
food to relieve the famine; these constitute
the chief business of the steamers on the
Shannon. But they would much increase
their trade for themselves. It is not yet
two years since the large boats were launched
on the upper Shannon. As yet they cannot
ascend higher than Shannon harbour,
thirty-seven miles from Killaloe, fifty-two
miles from Limerick, one hundred and
twenty-nine miles from the sea. When the
improvements of the river now in
progress, and seen to be completed,
permit, they will go up to Athlone, which
is twenty miles farther. Ultimately steam
vessels will go to Lough Allen, two
hundred and thirty-four miles from the
sea, one hundred and fifty-seven miles
above Limerick, and one hundred and
forty-two miles of direct steaming from
Killaloe. At present only one class of
steamers go twice a week over the twenty
miles between Shannon harbour and
Athlone.

Proceeding up the river from Athlone
to Lanesborough, the distance is twenty-
one miles, most of it a lake called Lough
Ree, wider, more diversified, and said to
be finer in scenery than Lough Derg.
At Lanesborough the water is 15 feet
The Arigna, falling into the Shannon at Lough Allen, runs through a region of iron ore, and the lead of boundless extent. Coals are said to be found there also. Turf fuel is found abundantly everywhere. I cannot hazard an opinion as to its applicability to steam machinery on a large scale. If water power were used it might serve for heating purposes well enough.

Yesterday, William Smith, Esq., sub-sheriff, with Captain Granville and detachments of the 55th Infantry and 8th Hussars, and a strong party of police, under head constable O'Malley, proceeded to Ballina-carriga to take possession of land from James Hanley and six others for non-payment of rent. This property belonged to the Rev. Charles Dawson, who was murdered on those lands in the year 1835.

Another landlord still quarrelling with them, doing everything to exasperate, nothing to assist; and calling to his help the military power of cavalry, infantry, and constabulary, and the civil powers of the sheriff's office. We have England paying out of English taxes all those armed men, and providing them with bullets, bayonets, swords, guns, and gunpowder, to unhouse and turn to the frosts of February those tenants and their families.

But, practically, his plan would be extremely unfair to ratepayers and to the poor. Practically he is not himself entitled to much consideration on the subject. Whatever the tenants may do to employ the people out of their income, he at least draws his rents and employs none at present. I have this fact on the authority of a poor-law commissioner, who is prepared to prove it if it is denied. His plan of taxing estates separately, in 'units', or in very limited districts, to adapt the rates to the pauperism of the estates, would allow him and his land, and the large estates of some of his relatives in the county of Limerick, to escape taxation for the paupers, many of them probably living in Limerick city, who were cleared as evicted paupers, many of them probably living in Limerick city, who were cleared as
move of the Irish landowners be narrowly watched. It has one purpose, and one only, to relieve the owners of estates which have been cleared by the eviction of tenantry from paying rates to support the evicted, now that they are paupers crowded into villages and towns.

Longford, 5th March, 1847

[Extrait]

Mr. John O'Connell, M.P. for Kilkenny, has written a letter from London to the Repeal Association, which is reprinted in most of the Irish newspapers. It may possibly attract no attention in England, nor may this notice of it in Ireland; but the subject is of the greatest importance; and, as the member for Kilkenny has the temerity to provoke a discussion on such a subject - that of the generosity of the English public to the Irish people in this present season of distress - I shall not shrink from telling him, respectfully yet firmly, that his letter to the Repeal Association now circulated throughout Ireland is a most unfounded and unworthy libel upon the English people. And more, that of all the gentry in Ireland, the repeal members of parliament, so far as I have yet seen their estates and the starving people on their estates, are the gentry least entitled to accuse the English public of apathy or hardheartedness.

Mr. John O'Connell, referring to an address delivered by him on the previous evening in the House of Commons, says in his letter-

*I also drew attention to a monstrous sentiment prevailing in some quarters here, that it is in the natural order of things for a population to be suffered to diminish down to the diminished supply of food in a country afflicted with scarcity. I implored of the government and the House not to let this cruel sentiment have influence upon them in dealing with the question of relief to Ireland, and expressed my fears, from what I had seen, that inadequate and insufficient as are the measures proposed by the government, yet, in so far as those measures involve the expenditure of money, the government are absolutely in advance of English opinion.*

I can prove to Mr. John O'Connell, and to all whom it may concern, by reference to Irish estates one by one, to farms upon those estates one by one, and by reference to the charity given or wages paid for actual labour now performed, giving the names of the proprietors and middlemen one by one, whose reputation is involved in the question, that, whatever the stage of liberality may be now arrived at by the government, public opinion and public generosity in England are far in advance of public opinion and public generosity in Ireland.

Some Irish gentlemen may be too poor to have much to give away in the present emergency; but the poorest of them might give something. The greatness of the necessity seems to be, for them, an excuse for doing nothing at all - literally nothing at all. Moreover, they might pay wages sufficient to keep their work-people out of the public soup-kitchens, and in a condition able to work.

It would seem invidious, and would be very unpleasant, to pick those gentlemen out by name; but if Mr. John O'Connell, Mr. Smith O'Brien, and the others, of Old and Young Ireland, continue to misrepresent in their letters to Ireland the generous exertions of the English government and the English public on behalf of the Irish people, I shall name them, and name them in connection with conduct which should cover them with shame.

Cattle are dear and corn is dear. The incomes arising from cattle and corn are better this year, in many districts, than usual. In some counties rents have not been well paid; in others rents were never so readily paid, nor the tenants able to pay
them, as this year. Yet even there, the apathy of the gentry is the same. This very squall, whose scaring men are starving as if they had related, rails in public against the government; against political economy; and in the hearing of hundreds of people, the other day, of whom I was one, declared that Lord John Russell was answerable for all the deaths that were taking place in Ireland, for that he could make food cheaper if he chose.

As to Mr. O'Connell's assertion of 'A monstrous sentiment prevailing in some quarters here, (in London), that it is in the natural order of things for a population to be suffered to diminish down to the supply of food in a country afflicted with scarcity', it is neither more nor less than a monstrous mis-statement on his part of one of the simplest principles of the most philanthropic of mankind - the political economist.

It is not said by them to be 'in the natural order of things for a population to be suffered to diminish down to the supply of food in the country afflicted with scarcity'. It is said by them to be 'in the natural order of things for a population to suffer from a diminution of food, and to sink in wretchedness and suffering in proportion to the increase in their numbers and the decrease in the supply of their food; ultimately, if the diminution of food becomes excessive and of long duration, to die and diminish with it.' It is in the natural order of things for human beings to die if they do not obtain sustenance for their bodies, just as it is in the natural order of things for agriculture to languish and fail to produce food for a great population when idle, dissolve, and improvidently extract, from the cultivators all their capital, the improving cultivator only being a mark for the landlord's caprice. It is in the natural order of things for the tenant farmers of Ireland to be oppressed and made bad farmers when their political uses are deemed of higher importance by the landlords than their agricultural uses. It is in the natural order of things for the oppressed tenantry to listen to those who are continually telling them of their oppression, and promising them a blissful change by some one mighty action which will change the world for them. As a political Protestant landlord has been in persecuting the Catholic tenantry for their religion and their adherence to repeal politics, they are exceeded in cruelty by landlords of the repeal party - the very vultures of a heartless, ignorant, haughty, and selfish class of men.

It is in the natural order of things for agriculture to be profitless without a manufacturing and trading population to purchase and consume the agricultural produce. It is in the natural order of things for an exclusively agricultural population to be always liable to famine; for it is in the natural order of things for such a population to overstock the land with itself, having no other outlet for the younger branches of families, until they become so numerous and so poor that they cannot afford to cultivate the land; they eat up their seed, their stock, their implements, and consume their own strength.

And so saying, I leave all the rest of Mr. John O'Connell's assertion to its own refutation, namely, that 'a monstrous sentiment prevails in London, that it is the natural order of things for a population to be suffered to diminish down', &c. It must have required a good deal of courage, to say the least of it, for any Irishman to have written that of the English people in reference to their present treatment of the Irish.

Here is a passage from another gentleman, who is frequently in print on this side of the channel, John S. Dwyer, Esq. of Castleconnell, near Limerick. The letter is one of a series addressed to Lord John Russell. His Lordship is better employed in the service of Ireland than to be reading such letters. Yet this, as an Irish landlord's letter, is a curiosity worth reading. Castleconnell, where it is written, is the locality of the great rapids of the Shannon, powerful for manufactures to an illegitimate extent, and upon which there is only one mill, and that for grinding corn. Your Lordship is aware that the party of whose name and traditions you are the representative and leader has very slight claims to the confidence of either the agricultural classes of Great Britain or of the Irish as a nation; a party who, when in power, legislated solely for the aggrandisement of money-dealers, merchants, and manufacturers.

Mr. Dwyer, like every other Irish gentleman, tells the government and everybody else that they know nothing about Ireland. 'Oh! sure you know nothing about Ireland,' 'What Englishman knows anything about Ireland!'

Now, I have very serious doubts if the Irish gentry do not know less of Ireland, their mother country - the mother whom they have reduced to beggary and shame - than most Englishmen do who have transacted business in this land. At all events they know nothing of England, and I hold that it is essentially necessary that they do their own country good they should know something of England.

For instance Mr. Dwyer thinks that the complicated tenures of Irish land are 'the sole reason for the defective state of Irish agriculture, and he compares those complicated tenures with the 'simple' tenures of England, under which he says she has flourished. Now, in England, the legal harness under which land is held is identically the same as in Ireland. Leases for ever, renewable by fines - copyholds - leases on lives - joint ownership - tenancies-at-will - and every other obstacle which can mar good agriculture, exist in England. Moreover, the burthens of county-rates and poor-rates are, and have long been, heavier on English land than on Irish land. Hitherto the Irish landlord has laid all the burthens of the soil on the tenant. Even the poor-rate, which he is supposed to pay one-half of, he makes the tenant pay the whole of, deducting his own half afterwards from that half-year's rent which relates to the half-year when the rate was made. The tenant, being thus obliged for the landlord's convenience to pay part of his rent before it is due. So far as English agriculture is more prosperous than that of Ireland, it is in soine defiance of the complicated tenures.

It is the reader and higher-priced markets in England that makes agriculture more profitable there; and those reader and higher-priced markets are created by the manufacturing and trading classes. Even the rents of the Irish landlords are cheaply obtained from the manufacturing and trading classes of England, who eat and pay for Irish produce. If the Irish landlords would keep that produce at home, and would still have their rents, they must create manufactures, and commence at home; and such gentlemen as Mr. John S. Dwyer must cease to think, and write, and act nonsense.

If he knew more of England than he does, he would know that legislation in favour of English manufactures is repudiated. It never did good; it always did mischief. Manufactures thrive by being left alone, untouched by legislation.

If he knew anything of England, he would know that she is not jealous, as he asserts she is, of Irish prosperity. The more that Ireland could manufacture, the richer would her population be, and the better customers would England and Ireland be to one another. Lancashire and Yorkshire lie near each other; they are not enemies, yet they are competitors; the prosperity of the one is the life of the other. Ireland and England would be related in a similar manner, if more nearly on an equality of prosperity. It is the interest of England to raise Ireland to her own level; they are the enemies of Ireland who prevent it; those enemies are within herself.

Limerick, 22nd March, 1847

Though a previous letter was dated here, I have not yet described Limerick city and county. Even now the city must be omitted, but the county has pressing claims to notice.

Its greatest length from east to west is fifty-four miles; its greatest breadth from north to south is thirty-five miles. It is chiefly a plain lying south-east of the Shannon, gently undulating. The soil is
fertile beyond anything that can be expressed in common agricultural language. With good roads in some parts, and the best of hard stone to make good roads everywhere; with intersecting streams that drive mills and make flour; with other rivers navigable from the Shannon inland, with the Shannon, broad and deep, all along the western boundary, rolling to the Atlantic, with good roads in some parts, roads everywhere; with intersecting the Shannon inland, with the Shannon, expressed in common agricultural streams that drive mills and make meal Limerick situated on that river, containing poor county, if judged by the enormous with all those advantages, Limerick county proportion of its people unemployed by its own resources; still poor, if judged by the common evidences of poverty and disorder, an overwhelming military force in the principal town, barracks for soldiers in the smaller towns, stations, seventy in number, for the armed constabulary in the villages; still poor, if judged by the crimes committed in the struggle to sustain human life on the smallest amount of food now, and on the worst quality of food always before now, which human beings ever subsisted on; but a rich county if judged by the amount of rent paid to its landowners, and by their grandeur of castles, parks, mansions, equipages, ancient family lineage, and new dignities outshining family lineage. There is Sir Lucius O'Brien, and William Smith O'Brien, M.P. for the county, and other O'Briens, all descendants of the kings of Munster. There are several O'Grady's; and there is the O'Grady of Killyballyowen. There is John Fitzgerald Fitzgerald, 'the Knight of Glen', who knighted the banks of the Shannon, very ancient; and next door to him, at Mount Trenchard, there is Lord Mounteagle, almost bran new. There is the Earl of Devon, owner, but, I regret to say, only as yet nominal owner, of a large tract of the very richest land near Newcastle. There is William Monsell, Esq. of Tervoe, who writes so fervidly in favour of the poor-law which shall authorise rates to be levied on each estate separately, according to the pauperism on that estate. And there is the Earl of Dunraven, his father-in-law, whose great estates are, like his own, so well cleared of population and paupers. There is the Earl of Clare, Lord Guillamore, Lord Clarina, Lord Cloncurry, Earl of Kingston, Lord Kinmerry, and about a hundred other proprietors, resident and non-resident, for whose names and titles space is not allowable in these columns. One of them, Squire Westropp, may be named, however, as it was from a part of his estate that the sub-sheriff, constabulary, 55th infantry, and 8th hussars were employed about a month ago in ejecting tenants for the non-payment of rent. And this fact recalls to my mind that the English Earl of S—— owns an estate in this county from which some years ago, before English newspapers took much note of Irish affairs, and before Irish papers dared to publish and comment on the acts of landlordism, 1500 persons were turned out homeless, landless, penniless, and potatoless, at the point of the bayonet, in one day. Mr. Doolan of Fairy Hill, Portumna, county of Galway, formerly commandant of the police in Limerick county, told me a few days ago that he had the command on that occasion, and that he saw many of those people lingering on the roads and dying of want months after. Some of them are still paupers in the towns and villages. Mr. Doolan also stated, and authorised the use of his name in connection with it, that while in that command he was employed in obtaining evidence in cases of murder, and in paying the witnesses to go to America after they had given evidence. One case of murder was as follows: A farmer was distracted upon for rent, and his potatoes, stored in a pit in the haggard, were under distractant watched by two keepers. The farmer's family had no other food but those potatoes. The keepers would not allow them to have any potatoes, the orders being against it. In desperation the family at last rose upon the two keepers and murdered them. They were tried and hanged, but not all at once. The father was hanged first; next two sons; next their mother was hanged; and at last one of the daughters. The whole expense of the trials and the rewards to witnesses was £10,000, for which Mr. Doolan holds vouchers, and to the correctness of which he says he is ready to make oath. He says that his undoubting opinion is, that had the most ordinary feelings of humanity, simple fair play, been observed towards those people, no murder would have been committed. The two keepers would have been saved, and the five lives of father, mother, daughter and two sons, would not have been given to vengeance and the gallowses. And there would have been saved £10,000, expended on a special commission, on different trials, on prosecuting, counsel, witnesses, and hangmen; besides the saving to England in not being called upon to augment the garrisons of Limerick and the other towns with additional cavalry, infantry, and artillery.

But the most extraordinary part of this drama of cruelty, vengeance, and judicial butchery, is probably this, that the owner of the property on which the distraint for rent was made and the murder committed, lived across the river, and lives there still, draws, it is believed, about £60,000 per annum out of his Irish estates, chiefly in the county of Limerick; has not been in Ireland once during the present century, though an Irishman born; and averred to Mr. Doolan, on the latter paying him a visit a few years ago, that he had never, before Mr. Doolan told him, heard of the distrain, the murders, the trials, and the executions; that he left everything to his agents, and that it was their business, not his, to know those things. Mr. Doolan was concerned, as commandant of the police, in another murder prosecution, for which there was a special commission which cost, with the outift of the witnesses to Canada/£30,000 - Thirty thousand pounds of national taxes, besides extra military expenses/for one murder; that murder occasioned by the inhuman conduct of an Irish landlord with the law of landlordism at his command.

Lord Devon's commission of 1844 did not receive evidence on any cases of agrarian outrage beyond a very recent period; nor did it take note of such cases save when they came out incidentally. Mr. Doolan states that such cases as the ejectment of 1500 persons by the Earl of S——, which led to a awful misery and crime, and enormous military expenses, could not occur now. The Earl of Lucan in the House of Lords, two weeks ago, doubted the truth of a statement made by Lord Brougham, that 400 ejectments had been effected in the barony of Tyrawley, county of Mayo 'because', said Lord Lucan, 'there is now so much noise made about those things in the newspapers, I do not think so many ejectments could have taken place without us hearing more about them'. The fear of the newspapers is the reason given by Mr. Doolan for such things being impossible or unlikely now.

My last letter from Mayo allowed some light to fall upon the ejectment cases in that county. To get rent for the landlords and to get the largest amount of cost for the agents are the causes of ejectments being brought against the small tenantry. They are brought in hundreds, though not intended to be carried into execution. As to the impossibility of such a case as Lord S——'s ejection of 1500 persons being repeated now, because of the newspapers, I shall here relate a case not yet brought to my knowledge, of which I have allowed to pass with less notice than enough. It occurred in Suffolks, on Lord S——'s estate there, and exposes the injustice and evil working of the feudal privileges of land and landlords being permitted to exist in this commercial age of England.

Anne Manning, of Wangford, in Suffolk, was tried at Ipswich for setting her cottage on fire, and found guilty, and sentenced only to eighteen months imprisonment because of peculiar circumstances in the case. I was present at the trial, and, from what I heard then, I made inquiries, and ascertained these appalling facts:

That it was customary for the Suffolk labourers to steal pheasants' eggs from one gamekeeper and sell them to another gamekeeper who was anxious to breed up a large head of game for his master. All of the labourers were habitually low paid in Suffolk, through their superabundance of numbers, as they are in Limerick, and through the waste of the corn crops by
game and bad farming. Therefore, with low wages and inadequate employment, it became a trade eagerly pursued by the farm labourers, that of robbing the pheasants' nests and selling the eggs to the gamekeepers, probably to those from whom they had been stolen. One of Lord S——'s gamekeepers had lost so many eggs that he was afraid to face his Lordship. His Lordship was over here seeing his Irish estates, and sent notice to Suffolk what day he would return from Ireland. The gamekeeper dreaded that day the more the nearer that it came, and at last, in desperation, shot himself. The evidence on the coroner's jury found a cause for the suicide in the depression of spirits, arising from the loss of pheasants' eggs, and a consequent diminished number of birds. Another gamekeeper imitated the first, and also shot himself. The evidence on the coroner's jury found a cause for the suicide in the depression of spirits, arising from the loss of pheasants' eggs, and a consequent diminished number of birds. Another gamekeeper imitated the first, and also shot himself. One of the men who had stolen those eggs, the husband of Anne Manning, was committed to jail for three months, by the magistrates, for the offence. During his imprisonment, his wife, with a family of very young children, was left to her own resources at out-field labour for her own and their support, the wages for women at field labour being only 8d. per day. Her cottage rent, which had been paid weekly before her husband was caught stealing the pheasants' eggs, fell into arrear. The landlord of the cottage distrained upon the furniture for the rent, and upon a certain day the poor furniture was to be sold. The wretched woman became desperate, and said the furniture should not be sold. To prevent it, she set fire to the house. This was in June 1844, when incendiary fires were unhappily so common in Suffolk, when the madman Lancaster, convicted of some of those fires, urged others to kindle them, and excused himself for kindling them, because it was for the good of the farmers and the landlords to burn the corn and make it scarce and dear! And it was at the assizes at the end of July that Anne Manning was tried for the burning of her cottage, her husband in prison for the eggs, her little children in the workhouse. The late Mr. Justice Williams was the judge; and it was reported through the courts and Ipswich at the time, that he declared himself unable, as a man, to pass sentence on that woman, as a judge. At all events he did not pass sentence on her. She was taken into the adjoining court, and Mr. Baron Alderson sitting there, adjudged her to eighteen months imprisonment, a light punishment for arson; and even he was overcome with emotion as he did it.

But to quit Suffolk and its poor farm labourers, and return to Limerick with its poorer, where Lord S——'s estate, depopulated of 1500 persons in one day, is situated. I find in the Devon Blue Book, Part II, page 595, that a Mr. Michael Byrne, in complaining of the county-cess being entirely paid by occupiers who have no control over its expenditure, says:

"The landlords will not pay one single shilling of the charges for repairing roads and bridges, and for the police and gaols and dispensaries. In the case of a new road, as in the case of Lord Stradbroke, made by the occupiers in the barony which it passed through, Lord Stradbroke did not pay one shilling, though it improved his estate 50 per cent; they made roads through the mountains which improved the value tenfold - it fell upon the people totally unconnected with his estate; that I think very unjust. I must pay for all the improvements on Lord Portarlington's estate, though he does not pay one shilling. In the last session there were fourteen of the great people (voting away the money as grand jurors) that did not pay one shilling of the kind. They are benefited, but they do not pay the tax."

"Do you consider that the tenants do not take into consideration the amount of the county-cess at the time they are proposing for land?"

"It is very little calculated. They are so anxious to get into a farm, they make no calculation. They are anxious to get..."
anywhere, whoever farm they can, and then struggle on'.

In these italic lines is written the agricultural and whole social history of Ireland. They were uttered before the commissioners on the 15th of August 1844. Immediately following which Lord S——, who was in Ireland at the time, (in fact, it was this very visit in 1844, the return from which the gamekeepers in Suffolk so drollied, the eggs being lost, that they shot themselves: Lord S——, in a very angry tone, denied that the county-cers was spent in making the road through his mountain property as alleged by Mr. Byrne. His Lordship says, Appendix B, page 53.

'Some ten years since, £50,000 were granted by parliament for improving roads and opening lines in districts requiring them'.

He then proceeds to say that he expected a part of this money, but did not get any of it to make roads through his mountain property, though he went to the expense of having surveys made to plan where those roads should be. His Lordship adds that, for 'such persons as Mr. Michael Byrne' to be bringing the names of landlords before the public who went to the expense of private surveys for private roads, expecting to get public money to make them, and who did not get the public money, is a very hard case.

It is clear that Lord S—— did not make the roads on his Limerick estate, he says so himself: and as they are made, I am inclined to believe Mr. Michael Byrne's account of the source of the expense. The view from those very roads of the great plain of Limerick is thus described in the 'Hand Book for Travellers in Ireland', published in 1844, by the Messrs. Curry of Dublin:

In ascending by the new road which winds along the slopes of the hills, the eye ranges over one of the most extensive fertile plains in the kingdom, and in this fertile but wretchedly cultivated district, except the larger towns and demesnes there are few objects on which the eye can with pleasure repose. The numerous low clay-huts, exactly the colour of the soil, afford no relief, and the widely scattered seats appear as mere specks on the surface of the immense space. In the autumnal months, however, when the various corn crops are ripening, this surface a fertile soil, laid out in larger breadth, it continues good throughout the year. That same limestone rock bears upon its surface a fertile soil, laid out in larger breadth, though from its extent, sublime and elegant may be classed with the best streets of any town or city in the United Kingdom. And leaving that street behind, and with it Limerick, and losing sight of the Shannon, and feeling as if there was room for heart-sickness because the Shannon is out of sight - so beautiful upon the visual senses, so suggestive with its broad waters, deep and clear, of contemplation deep though not clear, of what such a river was made for, if not to be made to do more for mankind on its shores before many years are over; losing sight of the Shannon and leaving Limerick, we have several miles of roads of such a breadth, hardness, and smoothness, as to be unsurpassed anywhere: though not always so ample in breadth, it continues good throughout the country. The limestone rock, which abounds everywhere, affords road metal of the best kind, cheaply and abundantly. That same limestone rock bears upon its surface a fertile soil, laid out in larger breadth, and seemingly better cultivated. It also affords good building stones for the cottage dwellings of the county, and these dwellings we see in many parts standing with substantial walls and without roofs, the roofs having been taken off to get the indwellers out, as if they were roofless houses, at least large within to be got out at the doors. They had, in fact, only held too tenaciously, somewhat as the limpet does on the sea-rock, which suffers its shell to be broken and itself exposed to death rather than quit its hold; the instinct of self-preservation being the same in the shellfish of the sea-rock or the roofless house of the irish farmer of Ireland, neither knowing how to live if they quit their hold. Those roofless houses are more numerous as we approach Rathkeale, where the landlords have been making clearances more recently. The landlords who cleared the population from their
That better cultivation prevails, with better rent paid to the landlords, and more produce sent to market on those farms that have been cleared, is undeniable; and the fact is not to be lost sight of, that the more produce that can be raised upon any estate with the least of it consumed on that estate, even if it be for the benefit of the landlord in the first instance, is for the national good ultimately. But this is not so if the consumers beyond the estate, who should eat and pay for that produce, are not profitably employed at work which enables them to pay for it. The Irish landlord sees his English brother Lord, or he himself behind, without regard to there being a place in the world for those people to go to, and not as in England by a force applied by others before them to draw them out and provide profitable employment for them. The Irish landlord also legislates for his class against manufacturers and traders, clears away the rural population by a force applied by himself behind, without regard to there being a place in the world for those people to go to, and not as in England by a force applied by others before them to draw them out and provide profitable employment for them. The Irish landlord is more profitable where the dense rural population is thinned out, the cleared soil being at the same time a fertile soil. But where is the right, legal or moral, human or divine, to clear away the inhabitants without making industrial provision for them elsewhere and elsewise than in agriculture? The right is not to be found even in the expediency which political economy would suggest, of providing a larger quantity of national food at a cheaper cost, because the national loss of having so many millions of the population dependent on charity and national taxes, and exposed to famine, and ever on the verge of social disorder, with a vast army of military and police ever required to check the disorder, is nationally a loss far exceeding the benefits derived from the larger quantity of national food produced at a cheaper cost.

But even the augmentation of produce for the markets does not always follow a thinning out of the population. In the first twenty miles of country seen from the public road south-west of Limerick the marketable farm produce has been augmented. The soil is so fertile and so easily worked, that it could not fail to give more corn to the market, the population on the soil being reduced, if ploughed and sown even in the most simple way. But to speak justly of the cultivators in that district, they seem to have advanced in agricultural progress far before the rest of Ireland, except, perhaps, a part of the county of Carlow. They are approaching the present agricultural condition of some parts of Suffolke and Norfolk, or that of the Lothians in Scotland twenty years ago. But this approach is only in the style of culture, crops, and rent; the wages of the
ploughmen are not more than half, on some farms little above one-third, of the wages of ploughmen in Norfolk or the Lothians. The Limerick men are not able to work well from sheer eminence of stomach, consequently their work becomes dear labour. The farmers and landlords who employ them are despisers of political economy, because political economists have denied the liability of the English tax-payers to support Irish landlords who employ them for their own profit.

Political economy proclaims the wrong of state provision of labour, never teaches that a private landlord or his agent. They are narrow and low for this reason; and as they are at first built to accommodate a youthful pair, newly-wedded, who are content to be in a small space, and who have not the means of adding many more feet of clay to the walls, the indulgence to keep to a mere hut operates on every side. In due time, and frequently sooner, children accumulate, and grow in size and number, and in their turn build huts behind, and have children, while still the old people, or the youngest sons and daughters of the old people, live in front. All have pigs and asses in the huts with them in ordinary times. They have not all pigs, for there is a large field of pigs in the country; but all have dunghills and pools of stagnation in the narrow places between and at the end of the huts, and not unfrequently within them. That there should be fever and other diseases originating in filth, dampness, and foul air, is only a natural consequence at the best of times. That there should be an aggravation of those diseases and death with them now, when to filth, dampness, and foul air is added famine, is not to be received as a wonder, but as a natural result. The wonder is, if wonder there be, that gentlemen of wealth, humanity, and patriotism, possessing broad lands, and so much fresh air that they know not what to do with that great share of earth and breadth of space which has falling among their lot, should deny their neighbours and fellow-creatures room to live and work.

The nearest and most remarkable landmark to this village of Ardag is Mr. William Smith O'Brien, M.P., Cahermoyle; his residence is about half a mile distant. The Cahermoyle estate is almost wholly laid down in large grazing farms, on none of which are the overgrowing population of the district allowed to build houses; they have only the choice of going, and they must go, to Ardag, and obtain leave to erect a hovel, in rear of the other hovels there, at an enormous rent, paid to the inhabitant of the hovel who permits the new comer to come; or they locate themselves in some nook of a public road, without a foot of ground, save what the clay-hut stands on. Mr. Smith O'Brien permits none to settle on his estate in that manner, nor in any way else.

Part of his property is in the Newcastle poor-law union, and part of it in Rathcave union. The portions of it in Newcastle union are rated for the poor at ninetwenty in the pound, there being two half-penny rates of fourpence halfpenny each.

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farms, which are in the Rathkeale union, are rated at tenpence in the pound per annum, only one rate for the year having been levied; Rathkeale, being more densely peopled, is rated at 2s. 6d. in the pound. Thus, the poorer district of Rathkeale pays three times more money for the relief of the poor than the rich grazing farms of Cahermoyle.

The entire population of Ardgagh, and of the farms of Cahermoyle, and every other landed property, is employed on the public works, save five men who are draining landed property, is employed on the public works. As the farming men only remain they do not all remain, the 1s. 4d. per day of the Board of Works being a temptation too strong for them to resist, and as the expense of providing them with meal at 3s. per stone in the absence of potatoes is an inducement to their masters to let them go to the public works, in some cases to release them from their hiring to allow them to go, so the 1s. per day, the highest wages paid by Mr. Smith O’Brien, only procures him men who have houses or conacre from him, and are bound to work for him.

The food of the Irish tenant farmer, told me that Mr. Barry’s conacre procures him men who have houses or conacre or hire conacre for potatoes, or shift in some other more miserable way than on conacre.

Mr. Smith O’Brien employed some men on his farm in 1845, as a relief for the potato failure of that year, in making a road through the demesne of Cahermoyle; he paid them 10d. per day. The men whom he now employs in draining the demesne are paid 1s. per day, which is 4d. less than the pay on the new roads, which are being made in various directions on and around his property by the Board of Works. As the farmers only remain on the farms who are hired by the year and dieted in the farmers’ houses, and they do not all remain, the 1s. 4d. per day of the Board of Works being a temptation too strong for them to resist, and as the expense of providing them with meal at 3s. per stone in the absence of potatoes is an inducement to their masters to let them go to the public works, in some cases to release them from their hiring to allow them to go, so the 1s. per day, the highest wages paid by Mr. Smith O’Brien, only procures him men who have houses or conacre from him, and are bound to work for him.

With meal of Indian corn or oats at 3s. per quarter, labourers under the Board of Works on the roads around Cahermoyle are only able to procure 42 lbs. 5 oz. of meal per week; which, divided among a family of five, or six, or seven persons, of which families there are many in small unhealthy huts in Ardgagh and on the adjoining farms, gives an allowance less than can possibly sustain them in health, even had they wholesome dwelling-places to live in. But Mr. Smith O’Brien has men working for him who live in such huts, with such families, and in greater hunger, for they have less food by one-fourth.

I was told that of five men employed in the demesne of Cahermoyle, four of them might be reckoned as employed there in charity. If they be so employed, the charity or relief is one-fourth less than that paid by government in the locality. But I demur to their employment being called charity or relief. They were performing work most necessary to be done - draining; work which, if done to the extent required on the Cahermoyle estate, should employ 200 men six months of the year for five years; an estate which, if cultivated as it should be, would turn his attention to his own property to enrich himself by producing human food from that land so naturally rich; no lying waste, he would be a patriot.

Since writing the foregoing, I have been on another farm of Mr. O’Brien’s where the natural quality of the soil far exceeds that of Gloucestershire. Mr. Sheeby, one of his tenants, holding about 150 acres, at 24s. per acre, has only one field in his employment and not another person, not even of his own family, employed in cultivation. The land is just sloping enough to be of easy drainage; a stream of water runs through it fit for irrigation or machinery; the Board of Works has just made a road through the farm; a fine rich loamy soil all in grass and rushes covers the whole surface; a kind of coal, excellent for burning lime, is found in the mountains within one hour’s walk, and roads were made to it by government grants of money several years ago, and more roads are being made to it by government now; but no attempt is made, has been made, or seems likely to be made by Mr. O’Brien to

further. Cahermoyle, besides being on the same geological stratum as Whitefield, is seven miles from the Shannon. Whitefield is about seven miles from the Severn. Cahermoyle is twenty miles from the city of Limerick; Whitefield is nearly the same from the city of Bristol.

But here the likeness ends. Whitefield contains 240 acres; Cahermoyle upwards of 1000. The best land of the latter is superior to any of the land of the former, and constitutes more than a half of the whole; the best land, the alluvium, of Whitefield, is but a few acres; of Cahermoyle it is 4½.

The expenditure for drainage, buildings, and useful roads on Whitefield was £7827. The expenditure on drainage on the farm land of Cahermoyle is nothing; that on the useful roads for improving the value of the land is nothing by landlord or tenant, and not another Board of Works, with the public money, is improving the farm roads.

Besides the sum of £7828 expended on permanent improvements on Whitefield farm by the landlord, the Earl of Duley, Mr. Morton, the tenant, has stock and working capital on it to the amount of £4500. The rent, before he took the farm in 1840, and before the capital was expended on it, was £200 per annum; tithe £33; poor rate £28; and road rate £4. The rent is now augmented to the amount of five per cent. upon £7828. The farmer calculates upon ten per cent. on his personal services on the farm; on wages for ten men at twelve shillings a-week each, and on all the payments to keep implements and roads in repair. What he obtains over all those returns is profit. And he has had profit after all those returns.

I apprehend that such a man as Mr. Morton is the true benefactor of his country, and that if Mr. Smith O’Brien would turn his attention to his own property to enrich himself by producing human food from that land so naturally rich; no lying waste, he would be a patriot.

Since writing the foregoing, I have been on another farm of Mr. O’Brien’s where the natural quality of the soil far exceeds that of Gloucestershire. Mr. Sheeby, one of his tenants, holding about 150 acres, at 24s. per acre, has only one field in his employment and not another person, not even of his own family, employed in cultivation. The land is just sloping enough to be of easy drainage; a stream of water runs through it fit for irrigation or machinery; the Board of Works has just made a road through the farm; a fine rich loamy soil all in grass and rushes covers the whole surface; a kind of coal, excellent for burning lime, is found in the mountains within one hour’s walk, and roads were made to it by government grants of money several years ago, and more roads are being made to it by government now; but no attempt is made, has been made, or seems likely to be made by Mr. O’Brien to

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The plan of a typical workhouse.

manufacture lime or bring lime to his farm land. The farmbuildings are clay huts, the roofs fallen or falling in; the fences are crooked mounds of earth with crooked ditches beside them; all manure from cattle runs waste into the ditches; the cattle lie in continual wetness, and are overtaken by periodical epidemics; but when fattened, (as fattened they are despite all the wreck and waste of the land, the soil is so rich), they go to the contractors for the navy in Cork and to England to be sold.

Such is Mr. Sheehy's farm, with only one lad, at 10s. per quarter of wages and his diet, employed on it; the other man, who has a family, and who used to be on the farm at 5d. per day and his diet, is now on the public works at 1s. 4d. per day.

On Mrs. Nolan's farm, near Cahermoyle, rich grazing land, about 100 acres, one lad only is employed. Her second workman has also left and gone on the public works. She has a field unsown, and she has been waiting to see if the government would give her seed to sow. This farm, I believe, belongs to a Mr. Studdert. But it is difficult to know who the landlords are. Smith O'Brien and several other gentlemen hold land as middlemen, at a very low rent, in this neighbourhood, under Dublin College.

Mr. Patrick Power has a farm of about 240 acres. Some of the fields, I see, have been in tillage, and are laid down to rest to recover from their exhaustion. They lie thus without grass or crop of any kind, but weeds that rise spontaneously for five or six years. Meanwhile, all his cattle manure runs to waste; the cattle lie without straw or bedding to make manure; the roofs are falling in above them; epidemic diseases periodically destroy them; two women only are hired in summer to make the butter; only one lad at 10s. per quarter is on the farm at present. The herdsman, Walsh, is on the public roads, at 1s. 4d. per day, with Mr. Power's consent, and Walsh's mother, a widow, is doing the herdsman's work in payment of 30s. of house rent. I went with her to her house. It is three paces square inside; was erected by her late husband; the roof is propped up by poles standing in the middle of the floor. I had to crouch nearly two fold to get in at the door; the floor is a puddle hole; the roof is broken in; the daylight is seen through it every day; the rain comes through when there is a shower.

Three similar hovels, and no other houses are on this farm. They had all a few perches of haggard or garden, but since the failure of the potatoes in 1845 and 1846, the rent of 30s. each was not paid, and the haggards have been taken from them. James Mulsey and Donovan, two of the cottier tenants of the hovels, are on the public works at 1s. 4d. per day. The highest wages they ever earned before was 8d. per day. Mathew Daly and his wife, another of the cottier tenants, are both sick of fever in their wretched hut, without fire, without food, without air or light, but what comes through the roof, which is nearly touching their fevered heads. Their wretched bed is on the wet puddle of the floor.

This farm, with those wretched people belongs to Captain Bateson, M.P. who voted the other day against the out-door relief clause of the New Poor Law. It adjoins Cahermoyle. The farm is valued for poor-rates at £1:1s. per acre; the rate is 10d. in the 20s. per annum. Cahermoyle demesne, consisting of 150 acres, is valued at £185 for rates, and rented by Mr. Massey for about £2 per acre for grazing. Wages paid upon that about £2 per annum and diet for one person.

Mr. O'Brien's house and garden, and 14 acres of plantation, are valued for poor-rate at £70; the rate 10d. in the pound. Mr. Condin's farm, belonging Mr. O'Brien, of 35 acres, is rated at £66. This, and a quantity of other land not on Mr. O'Brien's estate, employs at present one youth at 10s. per quarter and diet.

Mr. Magner's farm of 150 acres, rated at £190, is connected with other land not Mr. O'Brien's. It has two persons employed.

The men usually employed on all of those farms at this season of the year are on the public works. The farmers say that none of the men are worth their keep at present, 'keep is so dear'.

Mr. Robert O'Brien, brother to the member for Limerick, gave evidence before the Devon Commission. The reader will understand the force of it after reading the state of those grazing farms, and I have given a picture of them considerably within the truth. Mr. Robert O'Brien is agent for his brother, Sir Lucius O'Brien, in Clare; for his brother, William Smith O'Brien, Esq. M.P. of Cahermoyle; for their mother, Lady O'Brien; and for himself and other proprietors in Limerick and Clare. He states, Devon Blue Book, Part II, page 810-

'If a pasture farm is converted into tillage, it may be taken as a sign that the tenant is going down in the world'.

The tillage farms, it seems, are carried on without capital; the grazing farms must have some capital. Whitefield farm barely afforded a living to its tenant and £200 of rent to its landlord when the working capital was only £3:2:7 per acre, and the wages of labour, part of it for a thrasher, was only £75 per annum. Now, exclusive of all wages for draining, building, and road-making, the sum of £312 per annum is paid in wages, though there is machinery for thrashing, for regular weekly hands, and the working capital is £19 per acre.

Mr. Morton is a political economist, and as such pays 12s. per week to his men, though the current wages of the district are 8s. and 9s. He gets better men and cheaper labour by paying 12s. This is political economy.
Mr. Smith O'Brien is not a political economist. No portion of his estate measuring 240 acres (the size of Whitefield) pays more than £20 per annum; and the capital per acre is under £3. Instead of trying to get better men, or to make better men, in order to have cheaper labour, by paying higher wages than the wages of the neighbours, as a sound economist would do, he pays one-fourth less than the government pays.

Mr. Morton was an advocate for the repeal of the corn-laws, to enable him to carry on his farming with more economy and profit. Mr. Smith O'Brien used all the power he possessed to preserve the corn-laws.

It was one of the commonest arguments used on his side of the question that land would go out of cultivation and become pastures if protection was taken away. In Limerick, and on his own estate, it is deemed a sign of a 'farmer going down in the world' when he brings his farm into tillage.

Mr. O'Brien demands a repeal of the union, in order that Ireland may keep her produce and her wealth at home. He and his tenants send their cattle to England for produce and her wealth at home. He and his tenants send their cattle to England for

This stream is beautiful to look upon. But it is large enough to make one feel fatigued that it is not something more than beautiful. It has no mill upon it to grind meal; all meal must be ground at a distance of ten or twelve miles from hence. Its water falls from ledge to ledge, gathering into broad deep pools, whirling and playing below the shadows of the trees, and starting away again, as if calling it; and again it falls; but the people only look at it; they do not respond to its invitation and go to catch it. This little river, called the Arna, goes on to the Deel, which is a river of magnitude, a mile and a half below Newcastle, and with the Deel it reaches the Shannon by a course of about twenty miles.

Not only had there once a linen trade of small extent, and it still keeps a few looms going in coarse woollens. It had a bleach-field also for linen woven here and elsewhere, but that has disappeared. Its disappearance is spoken of bitterly. 'England took the linen trade from us, as she took everything else. She takes our corn and cattle, and she has our linen trade.' Thus do the consequent persons in Newcastle speak. 'Belfast and the counties in the north of Ireland have your linen trade', I answered; 'they would take that river Arna from you also if they could convey it there; and depend on it, that if Belfast had those waterfalls which you have, she would make more linen than she does. As to England taking your corn and cattle, there is William Smith O'Brien, your popular member, and, next to Lord Devon, your principal landlord; he sends the cattle to England. As to corn, the same thing may be said; it is sold for rent. You have not even thought it worth while to erect a mill to grind corn, though possessing all that water-power to drive the mill. So far from the English people desiring to take your corn from you and leave you to starve, they sought to buy corn in other countries of the world to supply themselves, and struggled hard for many years for leave to do so, but Mr. Smith O'Brien did all he could to prevent them, lest they might get enough elsewhere without taking it from you.'

'By God! his honour is speaking like a gentleman. There is truth in that same about Smith O'Brien and the corn bill.'

And do not you see, that with all his complaints about the government starving the people in these hard times, that he has been paying workmen one-fourth less than the government has been paying them? Do not you see that his farms of 150 acres do not each give employment to more than one slip of a boy, at 10s. per quarter and diet - yellow meal now, potatoes and milk when there were potatoes - while the rent from the same land is nearly £200?'

'By gar! that is the truth, every word of it; and never a word of a lie.'

'Well, the English merchants, despite of Smith O'Brien and the monopolist landlords of both countries, obtained leave to look abroad for corn, and if they had had leave to try abroad for it much sooner, they would have been able to bring much more of it to England, and to Ireland too, than they have done. But, as it is, they are fetching corn from all the world to Ireland, and Smith O'Brien and his rich tenant are sending their cattle to be sold and eaten in England. Cold are the only products of his land.'

And aber and pigs, and a few acres of potatoes afores the disease took them.

Very well, butter and pigs; they and the cattle go to England, not by the English forcing them from Smith O'Brien, but by his own free will. He does not allow you to get houses on his land, nor to get the land, nor to work upon it for wages, nor to eat its produce; and yet you say that if all the landlords and members of parliament were wrong, you would own be right enough; that Ireland would soon have her own. Do you mean her own landlords? for, if you do, the Earl of Devon, as an Englishman, who allows the small tenantry to have houses and holdings on his estate, will at least bear comparison with Smith O'Brien, who does not. His Lordship inherited the estate overwhelmed in debt, as you all know. The steward upon it, whom some of you have had reason to complain, were the stewards of the trustees. Since his Lordship got the property into his own hands, he has erected a tile manufactory to make drain tiles, and has begun to drain and improve the land by employing labour on it. He has gone but a small way compared with what should be done; but he has, at all events, done more than Smith O'Brien. Now the greater the number of landlords you have in your country who, with their servants, horses, and dogs, consume food and produce none, the poorer do they make your country.

But it is the parliament, your honour; the Irish parliament we are looking for to do us good'.

If you are promised great and good things from the Irish parliament by those who bid you look for it and in whom you put your faith and trust as leaders, it is natural that you should expect the Irish parliament to be indispensable to your well-being. But, in the first place, your parliament, if you had it, would be entirely composed of landlords and lawyers, neither of whom have as yet done you any

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**Newcastle, County Limerick**

*Extract*

This place contains about 3000 inhabitants in its streets, and probably 1000 more closely adjacent in clay huts; the huts standing in crowded groups, and huddled in some parts but behind but three deep, with only a narrow passage, filled with filth between them. Behind those huts are fields of grass, as fresh in March and as green as many English fields are in May.

Approaching the town from the direction of Limerick on the east, and from Cahermoyle and Ardagh on the north, the buildings look new, some of them handsome. The rows of huts have been cleared away; the small farms have been made into larger ones; the narrow lanes of the town have been widened into spacious thoroughfares; and a beautiful rivulet comes through the town, falling over ledges of limestone rock, fall succeeding fall, for the space of half a mile; while for a whole mile it is shaded by trees, the trees having the castle among them, and some smaller places of genteel residence.

Yet I was told, in the vicinity of Cahermoyle, that if all landlords were like Mr. Smith O'Brien, Ireland would have no famine. Ireland would have no complaints: 'Sure everything would be kept at home.'

In short Mr. Smith O'Brien is expected to be able to bring 'the repeal' to them, but what the repeal is or will be they cannot tell.

**Postscript. 28th March**

The Boards of Works is now reducing the number of men and the wages, in accordance with the last Treasury order. In all parts the wages are to be less on relief works than the current wages paid in the neighbourhood, to induce men to leave the relief works, and seek employment on the farms. The 'patriots' (Heaven save Ireland from such patriots!) exclaim against this cruelty of the imperial government, and they tell the people how differently an Irish parliament would have acted. It does not seem to occur to them that if they had raised the standard of wages in the neighbourhood, or if they had leave now, the relief wages would be right enough; that Ireland would soon have her own landlords? for, if you do, the Earl of Devon, as an Englishman, who allows the small tenantry to have houses and holdings on his estate, will at least bear comparison with Smith O'Brien, who does not. His Lordship inherited the estate overwhelmed in debt, as you all know. The steward upon it, whom some of you have had reason to complain, were the stewards of the trustees. Since his Lordship got the property into his own hands, he has erected a tile manufactory to make drain tiles, and has begun to drain and improve the land by employing labour on it. He has gone but a small way compared with what should be done; but he has, at all events, done more than Smith O'Brien. Now the greater the number of landlords you have in your country who, with their servants, horses, and dogs, consume food and produce none, the poorer do they make your country.

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If you are promised great and good things from the Irish parliament by those who bid you look for it and in whom you put your faith and trust as leaders, it is natural that you should expect the Irish parliament to be indispensable to your well-being. But, in the first place, your parliament, if you had it, would be entirely composed of landlords and lawyers, neither of whom have as yet done you any
good service, but much mischief. The imperial parliament was until recently comprised of the same materials. The English commercial classes have, after long struggles, succeeded in changing the current of imperial legislation, a change vastly more important than changing the seat of parliament from one city to another. Th representation in parliament of trade, intelligence, and toleration is now beginning to have the ascendancy in England. Feudalism and territorial representation is on the decline. It will decline more and more in England every year; but you would restore it in Ireland by an attack on the interests of all and sundry jobbers. You have no middle class to control them. It is to th new current of legislation from the commercial classes of England that you must look for real substantial benefits to Ireland.

'Sure the English manufacturers are jealous of Ireland; they would not let her walk or make a shoe for her own foot, if they could prevent her'.

'Not true, my friends; it is the converse of true. The old suicidal system of protection by which the feudal representatives legislated proceeded to bolster up the trade of one place at the expense of another. Lord George Bentinck for England, and Mr. Smith O'Brien for Ireland, are the representatives of that barbarous system of legislation now. And you confess that if you had an Irish parliament you would protect yourselves from the manufacturers of England. By so protecting yourselves you could only make yourselves poorer. England is all the poorer for her barbarous legislation, having once attempted to protect her manufactures against those of Ireland. Such a system is one of mutual robbery in the first instance, and mutual suicide at last. If every man and woman in Ireland wore a fresh change of Irish linen every day, if they had as many new garments in a year as they have holes in the old ones; if they rode leather boots and shoes, walked, and iron and railways to ride, and manufactured as largely for themselves in Ireland as the people of Lancashire and Yorkshire do, England would transact business with Ireland to an extent immeasurably greater than she can now do when Ireland is poor. English ships from India and America, instead of putting into Kinsale or the Cove of Cork in passing, for water only, or for shelter, would put in to deliver cargoes of sugar, tea, silks, and other things, rich and rare, rich over all the world, rare in Ireland, and they would reload with Irish manufactured goods.

'But what if Ireland had ships of her own?'

'All the better; the more ships the more trade; ships create trade. Ships are to commerce what ploughs are to agriculture; if you had Irish ships ploughing the ocean, and Irish ploughs ploughing Smith O'Brien's land, both Ireland and England, and you and Smith O'Brien, would be in better circumstances than you have yet been in. As to jealousy, you might as well suppose that England and Scotland would be jealous. As to ships, you might as well think that if Glasgow had none, and no trade, that Liverpool would have more ships and more trade. But Liverpool would suffer greatly if Glasgow ceased to have ships and trade. In like manner Liverpool would be directly benefited if Ireland was covered with manufactures, and had her shores swarming with ships. That narrow policy of protection is now powerless; its office was never anything but mischief; the English trading classes have overthrown it in defiance of such territorial legislators as Mr. Smith O'Brien. England repudiates the old suicidal system of protection by which the feudal legislators sought to protect her manufactures against Ireland. She and Ireland were mutually injured. England asks Ireland to protect herself against such bad legislators as the feudal owner of Cahrmoyle. The condition of his estate should be a warning to people who would trust him with the remodelling of a nation'.

'Such is the substance of a conversation held in Newcastle, in the county of Limerick; other topics were included, for which I have not space here."

'I have only space to say, that the estate of the Earl of Devon here is part of the great territorial possessions once belonging to the Irish Earl of Desmond. For an Irishman, as such, to lament that an English Earl should have been substituted for an Irish Earl, is natural enough. It was a wrong policy of that faction in England which has always held the government to the landed faction - to do so; but now that the deed has been effected for some centuries, and it is seen that the ancient race of landlords do no more for their land than the new race, it becomes the Irish people to look to something else for redemption than to landlordism.'

Newcastle, County Limerick

I have written a letter from this place already; but as the subject of this one is somewhat diversified, I send it too. I got a man named Michael Hearn to go with me one day on a pedestrian ramble among the farmers and poor cottiers, over the plain and up the mountain, and I shall here relate what we saw. First, however, of Michael Hearn, as he was a type of a very large class.

He rented about twelve statute acres under a Major Campbell of Scotland, whose property here lies intermingled with the Earl of Devon and Mr. Smith O'Brien's. He had been in the winter working on the public works; but was discharged when the New Relief Act came into operation on the 20th of March, he being a farmer. He had sown two and a half acres of his land with oats, and, having no more seed, had sublet the remainder of the ground for the season. He had a wife and eight children. She and seven of the children were in the workhouse and the fever hospital. His eldest daughter, aged seventeen, remained with him on the farm, but also lay ill of fever and dysentery. He said he had two sisters in London, and did not know what to do unless he put the bed and bedding in pawn, locked up the house, and took his daughter with him, according to his father to his aunt's in London, and put over the summer that way, at such work as he could get in England, leaving his family in the workhouse until he returned, and his farm, a rich fertile loam on limestone subsoil, to the care of the person who had the crops for the present year.

He showed me, as we passed along, a field where evictions took place twenty-two years ago, in reference to which the threatening letters signed 'Captain Rock' were first issued. Then he told of a murder that followed; and shewed me where five persons were all hanged in a row at once for that murder.

One of the new roads of the Board of Works had gone through his farm; it was left unfinished, and he seemed much aggrieved at not having proper fences put up where his pasture field was divided by the new road.

We next proceeded over Clohdeen farm, of ninety-four Irish acres, which are about equal to 153 statute acres. One of the new roads runs partly through this farm, and continues on one side of it for about half a mile, the farm being long and narrow. The land is almost wholly in meadow, very wet, and full of rushes. It is gently sloping, and could be easily drained in every part. A stream runs through the centre of it, laying bare the limestone rock at the general depth of six or eight feet. On this stream there was once a mill, alleged by Michael Hearn to be 900 years old, and erected by the Danes. It had been laid in ruins and covered up. Part of the water-wheel was dug out of the ruins not long ago. It is of hard oak, and is preserved as a curiosity. The stream does nothing now but wimple over its blue stones, wash the ankles of the bare-footed maidens while they wade in it after their cows, and carry away the farm-yard manure. The farm belongs to Mr. Smith O'Brien, and does not give employment to any person but the farmer, a 'slip of a boy', and a female who makes butter. The soil is a calcareous loam of the best quality, but everywhere undrained and overrun with foul vegetation.

At the west end of it, by the side of the rivulet, is a circular mound of earth said to be the remains of a Danish fort. The Danish water-wheel was found about a mile from this fort, and many human
People often rallied together in efforts to prevent evictions.

bones, supposed to be the remains of Danish soldiers, have been found.

Cloghdeen farm remains undisturbed and untouched by spade or shovel; not so this fort. It had the reputation of holding crocks of gold somewhere in its earth works, and many a spade and pick have been at work digging for the gold. Near a tree on the east side, Michael Hearn pointed to a place where the people went in great numbers to dig two or three years ago, in consequence of "a boy, named Hugh Ward, dreaming he seen the gold there. He lived in Newcastle then, he is now gone to London. Sure the drame was true and had to do with it, for the people got the tokens, when they dug wid their spades, that the boy seen in his drame. It was a horse shoe and four nails he seen. By gar! they dug, and sure enough there war the shoe and the four nails; the tokens wor found anyway; but they dug down and all back here, but they did not get the gold. Ah, sure it was God's will, praise be to his name, they wor not to get it.'

The reverence with which these poor flesh-worn peasants speak of sacred things is very remarkable. Michael's hand was instantly at his old hat, and the hat lifted as he spoke the last sentence. Sometimes I talk with a dozen or a score of poor creatures in some wretched cabin, where, seeing me enter, they soon gather together to ask questions. No question is more frequently put to me than this, 'Now, your honour, is the potato gone entirely do you think? Will it ever come back to us to grow as it done before? To which I usually reply, 'I have no fear but we shall have sound potatoes again; every law of nature or ordinance of God known to us justifies that expectation.' The moment they hear me speak the sacred name every hand is lifted to the old hats, and when the sentence is concluded, they say in a low, solemn tone, 'Glory to his name!'

Leaving the Danish fort on Smith O'Brien's estate (the people pronounce this name as if written O'Breyne) we proceeded through other farms, all in a state of nature and waste. The only sign of a landowning hand upon the property for any good purpose was a school-house conspicuous from its situation and white-washed walls, built by Lady O'Brien, the mother of the member for Limerick county.

A cross section of hills was half a mile before us, running from south to north, our faces being to the west. In a wooded ravine or recess in the hills was a white house of genteel appearance occupied by a Mr. Lake, who holds a number of good sized farms on leases for ever, from a family of Maunsels who again hold them under some other chief. The farms are sublet by Mr. Lake, and hardly one furrow had been at that time turned up. The tenants of ninety acres had been working on the relief works up to the 20th of March.

Having expressed much interest on the subject of digging in the earth for gold, I was shewn, at a distance, a place in the wood on the face of the hill fronting us, near Mr. Lake's house, where people had dug for gold. The last time any one had tried it, he said, an awful noise was heard in the wood, like a bull roaring, and the wind rushed and made a noise in the trees different from any noise ever made by the wind before that anybody had heard. They left off digging and came away, and the noises ceased.

At another place to which he pointed there was a round spot on which snow never lay in winter, and which never had dew on it when dew was on the grass around; the people went there to dig for gold, but the fumes of sulphur came up out of the ground and they took warning in time and left off.

There is a stratum of coal found in that hilly ridge, containing a great deal of sulphur. Probably the gas escapes from it through the earth at this spot, where snow melts and dew never lies.

Crossing an upland stubble field, I found the son of the tenant of ninety acres, already alluded to, at the plough. He had been at the public workshop to the previous week, and was only now beginning to plough the oat stubble, which had carried two crops without manure, to sow oats again. The liquid manure of the cows and yards on this farm, and most of the solid washed by the rain, was running to the streams and rivers. The young man left the plough and the horses standing in the middle of the field, and went up the hill-side with me, where the Board of Works had been making a road in the slaty rock winding up to the turf bogs four or five miles. His purpose in going with me seemed to be to shew how deceptive the slaty rocks were which they had been cutting down at so much a yard, there being hard places where they had not been able to make half as good wages by the yard as the men working by the day.

His father held the land under a tenant who held from a Mr. Massey. The lease was thirty-one years and some lives. All the years had expired and all the lives save one. That life was now old. He said if that life was out he would get a new lease, and he hoped a new under-landlord. His father would offer double the rent he now paid, which was about 12s. per statute acre, on condition of getting the land drained. But
at present neither the tenant under Mr. Massey nor Mr. Massey would do anything for life was out! Higher on the hill sides we found smaller holdings and a more numerous population. The measure of land there was a 'cow's grass'. The extent of land called a cow's grass differed according to quality. Its rent was £3.10s. A man named Thomas Killahlea and two children, boy and girl, were digging out bare. He held a cow's grass under Mr. Lake. He had only two pecks of oats for seed. This man was tall; his children were tall for their age; all three looked like spectres with spades in their hands. I have seen such sights, but none worse. Their purpose was to dig for life, but they looked as if breaking ground for their own burial, and as if a very shallow grave would serve them, they were so thin. The poor man shook his head when I spoke about his getting seed from his landlord. 'There were too many landlords above his little piece of ground,' he said, 'all trying to get something out of it; none of them would give; they would only take.'

We left him and went to the top of the hill range to see the turf bogs, and have a view from thence of the great plain of Limerick and the distant waters of the broad Shannon, lying on the green plain, in colour and shape as if all womankind had been washing and had chosen the plains of Limerick, Clare, and Kerry, to spread down their linen to dry.

I looked behind me, and there stood the phantom farmer, Thomas Killahlea, who had followed us up. He said nothing, but looked - oh! such looks, and thin jaws!

We went out on intricate passes in the bogs; and my attention was directed by Hearne to the district of iron and coals, the latter within a mile of us, the iron supposed to be everywhere through fifty miles of hilly country. I turned round to take the measure of those mountains of treasure with my eyes, and there again stood the lean hungry man. He caught at my words when I said a mountain of iron was worth more than a mountain of gold, and said, 'Sure the gold will buy more bread than the iron would.' But, said I, the iron would make better spades and ploughs to till the ground and make corn grow, and corn must grow and bread be made from it, before it can be purchased with gold.'

The lean man looked as if his spirit, standing in his own flesh, would leave him and take up its abode with me. I felt it going through me as if looking into the innermost pores of my body for food to eat and for seed oats. It moved through the veins with the blood, and finding no seed oats there, nor food, searched through every pocket to the bottom, and returned again and searched the flesh and blood, and the very heart; the poor man all the while gazing on me as if to see what the lean spirit might find; and it searched the more keenly that he spoke not a word.

On our return, half way down the hill side to his field, his two spectre children still stood leaning on their spades, which spades being long and narrow - only four inches broad, with handles six feet long - looked like spades made for spectres to dig with. His piece of land is sown.

We went into one of the numerous clay hills on the hill side to rest after a very long walk. An old woman was spinning flax. She was aged about fourscore, and could only speak Irish; yet by the aid of Michael, my interpreter, we held a discourse. She seemed pleased with, so far as I could tell her what she desired to know about the Queen and London. She had two grand-daughters with her, young women, one of them a beauty, both barefooted and very meanly dressed, poor things.

But in respect of beauty in a clay hut, I saw it in another house where Michael took me to get a drink of milk. One of the finest looking women of the English aristocracy is a duchess whose portrait has appeared often in the fashionable annuals. In this clay hut, with a baby four weeks old at her breast, on a stone at the turf fire, sat a young woman, wife and mother, a far from features and shape of head of that duchess who is younger by sixteen or eighteen years. She was considered to be comfortably married, as her husband and his people had some substance. The milk which I got bore evidence that they had a cow, as did the cow's stall on that side of the floor, two yards behind the beautiful young mother. A horse, which stood on the opposite side, with his hind feet two yards and a half from the hearth-stone, and his head haltered to the wall at the window, was another symptom that they were not the poorest of people. There would have been a pig had there been potatoes. An elderly woman, Michael's sister and the husband's mother, said, speaking of the baby, 'He has come to us in hard times; but may the times be better before he knows them, an it plase God'. To which Michael lifted his hat reverently and said, 'Glory to his name'. And the beautiful young mother, sitting on the stone among the ashes, turned her lustrous eyes to the low black roof of the hut and said, 'Glory be to his name', and then kissed her baby. Her mother-in-law followed both by the word 'Amen'!

**O'Brien's Bridge, County Clare, 12th April, 1847**

The letters from the county of Limerick, in which the uncultivated estates of Mr. Smith O'Brien and his neighbours are described, require that I should now say something of capital required for cultivation. I am now thirty-five miles from the farm of Mr. James M'Nab, a Scotchman. The years are yet few in number, only about fifteen, when all that farm had not been removed on a scale of greatness and precision of system which only an enterprising man of capital could undertake. The bog which only fed a few wild ducks and snipes was manufactured into fuel for the supply of Limerick city, giving the comfort of household fires to more people at a cheaper rate than they ever had such comfort before. Wages were paid to several hundreds of people, not employed before, in cutting the moss, and at a rate above the usual wages of the country. I see sixty pence at work on the farm now at 8s. per week, while ordinary farmers and gentlemen employers pay only 5s. and 6s. per week. Canals are cut, and boats enter from the Shannon, go through the farm where the land is reclaimed, to those parts where it is in process of reclamation, and are loaded with the dry fuel to go to Limerick. Some of the workmen say that I passed them near the road, 'God bless Mr. M'Nab and all his sort! he makes farm land where a snipe could not live, and pays such wages as never were paid here before. Pray God, Sir Richard gets the land in Ireland' is comprehensive and practical. I may therefore pause at this place on my journey to the north, and take sea in hand once more to write of the land of the O'Briens.

On capital, Mr. Robert O'Brien says:—

'There appears to be a great deal of unnecessary outcry on the subject of capital, as there exists sufficient in the country for its agricultural purposes, if it were applied with skill, and it would then become reproductive, instead of flying nearly idle in the funds and banks. A great deal of money belonging to the agricultural classes in this country is lying in bankers' hands, bearing a very low interest, which, if applied on the almost neglected land of the same farmers, would yield large returns; nor can any difference be discovered in the conduct of such persons, arising from their having leases or no leases.'

Because the leases are encumbered with law, and so full of reservations for the proprietors, and of penalties on the tenants, that, they cannot cultivate wisely and well. Let them move spade or plough, let them move hills, and their land will be reclaimed of their land from waste, the law is at them. To go into the strata of limestone rock under their farms, and quarry it to make lime of it in a kiln to lay on their farms, they might as well go into a den of animals with tusks which eat men alive, or into the limekiln itself, the lawyers are instantly or ultimately at them, and consume them with law.

I stand now on the north side of the Shannon, where it is approaching the falls of Castle Connell, and opposite to me is the farm of Mr. James M'Nab, a Scotchman. The years are yet few in number, only about fifteen, when all that farm had been removed on a scale of greatness and precision of system which only an enterprising man of capital could undertake. The bog which only fed a few wild ducks and snipes was manufactured into fuel for the supply of Limerick city, giving the comfort of household fires to more people at a cheaper rate than they ever had such comfort before. Wages were paid to several hundreds of people, not employed before, in cutting the moss, and at a rate above the usual wages of the country. I see sixty pence at work on the farm now at 8s. per week, while ordinary farmers and gentlemen employers pay only 5s. and 6s. per week. Canals are cut, and boats enter from the Shannon, go through the farm where the land is reclaimed, to those parts where it is in process of reclamation, and are loaded with the dry fuel to go to Limerick. Some of the workmen say that I passed them near the road, 'God bless Mr. M'Nab and all his sort! he makes farm land where a snipe could not live, and pays such wages as never were paid here before. Pray God, Sir Richard gets the
waste of the law, and does not succeed in
turning Mr. M’Nab out.

This Sir Richard is the owner of vast
possessions measured only by miles, which only fed snipes. He employs
himself in feeding horses and dogs, and in hunting foxes. His whole employment
is amusement. He has a residence near
Mallow, in Cork, and another at Castle-
connell, in Limerick. Horses and dogs to
hunt and eat corn and meal; idle servants
to eat bread and meat; a river, like a sea
broken out of bounds, rolling and roaring
through his demesne, with water-power
equal to the millwheels of a world - is also
kept idle: those are the signs of what Sir
Richard de Burgho does or is likely to do,
with the exception that he is at law with
Mr. James M’Nab, endeavouring to eject
him from the farm on some informality in
the lease. A similar lease under which Mr.
Watson, another tenant, held, has been
abrogated, owing to the legal technicalities
not being complied with, and it is
generally feared that Mr. M’Nab’s lease
will be broken in the same way.

Had he taken the bog on lease, and
kept it to breed snipes and frogs, miasmatic fevers and famine, he might
have held it without his lease being questioned. But to have cattle and corn,
and healthy farm fields, and to have much
to sell to a population who require much,
and the profit going into his pocket, he
might have kept it to breed snipes and frogs, barren moss by James M’Nab, to beautify
a country and feed its people, is for Sir
Richard de Burgho to go to work and clear
a bog for himself. He has many more to
begin upon. Hundreds of people in
Castleconnell and O’Brien’s Bridge are
without work and food; the corn and meal,
and bread, and meat which he feeds idle
horses, dogs, and servants upon, would
afford them wages and food to begin work
upon.

At all events, his success in taking Mr.
Watson’s property from him and his
attempt to take that of Mr. M’Nab, though
both held on lease, will not encourage
other men of capital and enterprise to try
to create fertility and fullness out of
barrenness and famine. And, if he
succeeds, one other warning will be given
to agriculturists to put their money in the
bank, even at a low per centage, rather
than risk it in the cultivation of land, as
Mr. Robert O’Brien says they do.

This gentleman proceeds to say -
‘The tillage is carried on with a very
small amount of capital by the ‘free crop’
system. And if they do purchase manure,
yield little return to the capital, and, by
their crops, take out of the land rather
more than they put into it. Hence the
frequent failures in the overworked soil’.

The term ‘free crop’ is thus explained:-
‘The labourer, not having land of his
own, gathers during the year, heaps of
manure, in spring applies to the
farmers who have have land and not
manure, who suffer him to put the manure
on the land and cultivate a crop of
potatoes; and, according to the quality of
the land, sometimes a sum of money is
paid, varying from 4s. to £1 per quarter of
an Irish acre, in addition to the manure, by
the labourer.’

It is always on very poor land where
this ‘free crop’ of the labourer is
permitted. Much of his own time and all
the time of his family is employed in
collecting this manure on the roads, while,
strange to say, the very farmer on whose
farm it is to be applied - on land exhausted
by three, four, or five crops without
manure - is allowing the streamlets and
rivers to carry away the natural riches of
his cow sheds, stables, and farm yard.
This waste of manure is universal; but the
free crop system is not universal.

Having explained the meaning of that
term, Mr. O’Brien proceeds to say that no
attempt to establish agricultural societies
has succeeded, because the only parties
having an interest in tillage or a desire to
see it extended, are the poorest of the
farmers, not able to support agricultural
societies; and -

The gentry generally hold rich lands,
which are kept for pasture, and do not as a
class feel so direct a sympathy with those
who occupy the waste and poor lands. A
farmer, with little or no capital, through
the medium of conacre and free crops, can
sufficiently manage to hold a tillage farm;
but he must have capital to hold it as a
pasture farm. The consequence of such
tillage tends to the impoverishment of the
land, and it is for this reason that so many
landlords have inserted covenants in their
leases against breaking pasture land’.

Mr. Smith O’Brien is one of those who
do so, while he amuses himself with
crying for a repeal of the union as if it
would repeal the covenants between him
and his tenants. If he would do his part as
a landlord towards providing that food for
Ireland which he blames the government
for not providing, he will repeal those
covenants, and set himself to teach his
tenants how to make their farms product-
ive of food; he will build habitable houses
for them and for the cattle, and contrive
to drain the meadow springs into the rivulets, instead of allowing the rivulets to take the farm-yard manure.

Mr. Robert O'Brien continues -

"Generally, it may be established as a rule, that it is only the poor lands which have been cottiered, (tilled by a cottier tenantry) for, while the population is very large and poor on the hilly lands, you may find but a comparatively small population on the rich lands'.

This has arisen from the clearance system. Under the old forty shilling freeholds, previous to 1829, the people, if cleared from the rich lands on the levels, were set to the mountains to farm there, for the sake of their votes. Many of the hills were occupied by those people rent free, for the sake of their votes; but when they were disfranchised they were called upon to pay rent, and ejected wherever the land was worth taking possession of, if they did not pay rent. If thus cleared away there, they swelled the measure of pauperism in the towns; if left there, they became the parents of pauper families on the hills. All that the landlords of the levels did or cared for was to keep them either on the hills or in the towns, or to get them off to England or America, or anywhere, so as they did not come down to take the grass from the horned cattle which were feeding to go to England for rent.

Mr. O'Brien proceeds thus, in corroboration of similar statements made by me in previous letters, before I knew that I had such a valuable witness -

The consolidation of farms is generally that of a number of small farms in tillage, giving subsistence and labour to whole families, into large pasture farms not requiring any labour; for a single herdsman, who receives no money wages, will be able to do all the labour required on a large farm, which, if kept in tillage, would employ a great many hands.

Yet on the farms of Cahermoyle, belonging to Mr. Smith O'Brien, and on others near them, even the herdsmen have been all the winter and spring on the relief lists of the Board of Works, the farmers, to save the herdsman's diet in the farm-houses, consenting to let some sister, or aunt, or mother, do the herding, that the herdsman might go and earn one shilling and fourpence per day on the relief lists of the Board of Works, the herdsman having subsistence and labour to whole families, into large pasture farms belonging to Mr. Smith O'Brien, and on others near them, even the herdsmen.

Relative to the increase of pauper gentry, Mr. Robert O'Brien says -

'The great value of land during the war induced many who were of a respectable farming class to sublet their lands, and set up to be gentlemen; and one frequently meets with people who say their father had £100, £200 &c. a-year out of such and such lands'.

This is another testimony against war, and against any policy of government, peaceful or warlike, which shall force consumption faster than production. Armies are paid out of taxes upon industry, and hundreds of thousands of working men and women are drawn from employment nationally profitable to supply the armies with food and clothing which is nationally unprofitable. It is another testimony against forcing money into circulation in greater amount than the industry of the nation requires to keep it in motion. A large supply of money let loose, or forced into circulation, does not necessarily give an impulse to industry and to the production of real national wealth. Its good or evil effects depend on the current it gets into - whether it sets people to consume without producing something that is useful to others, or sets them to produce more than they consume. In the time of the war it not only excited a vast consumption but from the universal ignorance of industrial economy which then prevailed - and which though not universal, still prevails - the occupiers of land, when the flood-tide of an over-high circulation made eddies at their doors, ceased to work, and ceased to direct the money which flowed to their doors to the farm fields to pay for more labour, to produce more corn; they took the money and retired with it to eat corn without working; they set themselves up as consumers, ceased to be producers, withdrew the national capital from production, and turned the current into a wrong channel.

The Irish members of Parliament, in crying for money to be poured into Ireland, and also seeking to have a larger number of idle consumers compelled to reside in the country - the absentee landlords, horses, hounds, and non-producing servants - do not seem to know that more consumption without more production will only make the country poorer. Mr. Smith O'Brien who proposed a few weeks ago to enforce the residence of landowners, under a penalty of a tax of ten per cent on their incomes, is himself an instance of a landlord who takes rent, buys food, clothes, and personal service with the rent, and adds no value to his land or to anything on the land.

Even those who get together a few thousand pounds by trade in Limerick, or in other Irish towns, with the exception probably of Belfast, set up as gentry. A tradesman with £10,000 in the bank, thinks it time to retire from business, and hunt, and keep a carriage and servants. The English manufacturers and merchants do not withdraw from business, to keep a retinue of servants and animals to consume food and clothing, and produce nothing, as soon as they have the means of retiring to be gentry out of business. They add the profits of one year to the capital of the year before, and do more business, create a greater amount of the necessaries and comforts of human requirements, and enable a greater number of human creatures to obtain them.

On the Value of Small Farms [Extrait]

Small farms are a favourite theme with certain parties in England. To relieve the competition for labour they would introduce a competition for land. Let us..."
glance at the results of competition for land in Ireland, and the evidence shewing how many acres are required in different counties to maintain a small farmer and his family.

Limerick - Mr. Roche, farmer: - 'A farm of sixteen acres sufficient to support a family constabulary'.

Mr. Monsell, land proprietor, states that there is no class of labourers in Limerick county who depend entirely on money wages. He pays some of his labourers by giving them land, they paying the rent in labour; and to others he gives conacre, potato ground for one crop only. He says he endeavours to regulate the wages in some degree according to the size of the families, by giving one shilling in summer and tenpence in winter; 'no other person in the county', he says, 'giving more than eightpence'.

In the letter dated from Rathkeale, which gave an account of the county as seen from the road between Limerick and that place, the agriculture was probably made to appear better than it really is. I mentioned the village of Patrick's Well. Mr. Monsell, speaking of his attendance at the petty sessions at that place, says, on the 26th of Aug. 1844: -

'It is decidedly desirable to have my labourers holding their ground immediately from myself. There was a curious instance occurred at the petty sessions at Patrick's Well on Friday last; there was a man who appeared before us, and it came out in the course of his examination that he paid thirty days' work for four perches of ground, and he built a house upon the ground himself. The person he held from held it from a middleman, and that middleman from another, and he held it again from the head landlord; and I should say such cases are not rare'.

Here we have the competition for land producing five graduations of tenant misery, the lowest tenant paying for four perches of land, the work of thirty days, and building his hovel besides. Yet with those appalling facts known to him, Mr. Feargus O'Connor, himself an Irish middleman once, and deriving whatever knowledge he has of agriculture from his experience as a middleman who lived on the rents of a wretched under tenancy, attempts to introduce his pernicious competition for land in England, by parcelling the English soil into two acre, three acre, and four acre farms to begin with. At least he attempts to make the working-men of England believe that they would be independent of the wages of labour and the competition in wages if they had the land.

Mr. Monsell proceeds: -

'Subletting and dividing of farms still continues; chiefly in the way of people endeavouring to divide even very small farms for the sake of allocating portions to their children'.

Would not all England, if divided, as propounded by Mr. Feargus O'Connor, into small farms of four acres, have to be divided again to allocate portions to chartist children? Listen to the questions and answers which expose the poverty of those parts of Ireland where the population in desperation are still able to get some of the land to divide:-

'What, in your opinion, is the general effect of the system?'

-'The general effect is to produce wretchedness and misery beyond description. The condition of the labourers who do not receive constant employment is very miserable indeed. I have had occasion to make a list of the persons in my parish, in which there is a good deal of employment given to the poor, and they are a good deal looked after, and I find the people are in general in a very destitute state. Out of 600 or 700, there are 158 in a state of very great destitution; they are in a state of great poverty, because they are only partly employed'.

Yet those people have, on an average, more than the breadth of land to each family that is to be allotted to the chartist prizeholders in England; and it is better land than that at O'Connoverly, or any other in the county of Hertford. It may be alleged that the rent in Ireland eats up the produce and the profit, and that the chartist prizeholders would be differently circumstanced, having no rent to pay. But their liabilities are equal to a heavy rent at the very outset; while the absence of rent does not save the occupiers from destitution when the land is minutely subdivided. Mr. Monsell continues: -

'There is one spot in the parish where the proprietor allowed people to settle and charged them no rent, and the state of absolute destitution in which those people are it is impossible to describe'. (This was in 1844).

'Are those people, generally speaking, willing to work if they can get it?' - 'Yes, perfectly willing'.

One source of the delusion under which working men in England have been induced to become shareholders in Feargus O'Connor's land company is the fictitious quantity of produce alleged by him to be derivable from the land.

But I shall not at present pursue the subject further. The English working population have neither been so well cared for, nor have they cared so well for themselves, as should have been and as will be; but it is not by a system of general pauperism upon minute portions of land that they are to make a change for the better - they must go forward, not turn back.