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AN ECONOMIC HISTORY
OF IRELAND

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BY

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"THE STORY OF DUBLIN"

"IRELAND FROM THE UNION TO CATHOLIC EMANCIPATION"

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TO THE MEMORY OF

HAROLD THORP

WHO CROWNED A LIFE OF KINDNESS

AND WELL-DOING

BY A DEATH OF GALLANTRY AND SELF-SACRIFICE

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

P R E F A C E

THIS volume has been written to furnish those interested in the economic aspect of Irish history with a general view of the trend of Irish development in that respect from the earliest to the most recent times. As this is necessarily to a large extent pioneer work, it is not to be hoped that the book will not suffer from defects and omissions, but, in view of the daily increasing importance of the subject, the author trusts that the account here given will be of value, not merely to scholars and students, but to all concerned in the welfare of the country. The authorities given in the footnotes will serve to some extent as a bibliography and may help those who wish to investigate more deeply special periods or particular branches of the study.

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AN ECONOMIC HISTORY OF IRELAND

CHAPTER I

Celt, Dane, and Anglo-Norman

Ireland before the conquest, regarded from the economic standpoint, provides a somewhat novel and interesting picture. The country was divided amongst a number of kingdoms, frequently warring with each other for primacy. Within these kingdoms were numbers of tribes, each headed by its chieftain. Within the tribe again were often to be found subordinate clans. The boundaries and composition of kingdoms and tribes often changed. Defeat in war led to loss of territory, or perhaps a tribe broke away and asserted its independence of its suzerain. Yet through all temporary variations ran a certain fundamental unity, due partly to the marked geographic isolation of Ireland, partly to the possession of a common language and a common code of customs. The population was probably scanty, considerably under a million. We are told that the country contained 184 *tuaths*, and that the *tuath* originally represented a population of 700 fighting men, that is to say, about 3,000 souls.¹ This would give for

¹ Dr. P. W. Joyce, "Social History of Ancient Ireland," I., 39, 40.

all Ireland a total population of a little over half a million.

The habits of the people were mainly pastoral, and cows formed their chief wealth and their customary standard of value. Besides the extensive bogs, which remain to this day, large tracts of land were under forest. The wilder part of the tribal domain, swampy bottom, woodland glade, the lower slopes of mountain, was treated as the common pasture of the community, on which each individual was entitled to turn out his beasts to graze. The poorer tribesmen could obtain stock from their richer fellows or from the chief, paying in return a certain number of cows annually as rent. But the produce of these herds was not sufficient to maintain the population, and hence it was necessary to practise tillage. The system of tenure by which arable land was usually held in early Ireland indicates a transition stage from the purely pastoral basis to one part pastoral, part agricultural. The arable land was divided in strips among the adult tribesmen, just as unutilized ground near a town or village is sometimes let out in "allotments" to-day. Like the "allotments," too, these strips were not held in permanency. By the custom known as gavelkind the tribal arable land was liable to redistribution every two or three years. This arrangement, strange as it appears to us now after so long an experience of settled property in land, is a very natural one where a pastoral community finds itself forced to cultivate the ground. Accustomed to the idea of a common pasture, it tills a common field, possibly at first working together and sharing the produce; then, when it is found that such a method would favour the

lazy and the maladroit at the expense of the skilful and industrious, giving to each man an equal portion of the land and allowing him to reap the reward of his labours. The periodical redistribution would be instituted in order to allow all to enjoy in turn the possession of special advantages of soil or situation, and perhaps also to give opportunity for the disposal of the lands of the dead and the assignment of arable land to adolescent members of the tribe. If the tribal territory increased and more arable land became available, or if the growth of population made further tillage desirable, additional tracts of land might be cultivated in "common fields," so that a single tribesman might be the possessor of various strips scattered hither and thither. The last survivals of this type of tenure in Ireland may still be studied in the "congested districts" of the extreme south and west of Ireland, where the "rundale" tenants, as they are called, graze their cattle in common on the hillsides or the stony island slopes, and till holdings composed of numbers of small patches of land separated from each other by considerable distances and unapproachable save by passing over similar properties of other tenants. With the best intentions in the world, it is a task of great complexity and delicacy to "stripe" these holdings, that is, to allot to each tenant a single unified holding equal in value to his scattered patches, and "striping" always leaves much discontent in its train. From this modern analogy it is possible to realise the extent of the resentment that must have been caused by the replacement, often sudden and forcible, of this loose and variable communal system by the permanent individual ownership characteristic of English law,

On the tilled lands oats furnished the main crop, though wheat and barley were also grown. Oatmeal porridge, together with flesh-meat, particularly pork, milk and milk products, such as butter and cheese, formed the staple dietary. The usual beverages were ale and mead. Houses were generally built of wood, the material being furnished in abundance by the forests around. Even churches and royal palaces were constructed of timber. Except for the round towers and a few ecclesiastical structures there seems to have been very little use of stone as a building material. There were no towns and few large villages. Some of the more famous monasteries are said to have attracted a large semi-permanent population of students or devotees, but even these communities can rarely have numbered as many as 2000 souls. Generally speaking, the unit was much smaller and was probably based on a defensive system, such as that of the rath, or village fort. This was a circular enclosure, protected by a rampart and ditch, frequently situated on a hill commanding a wide view of the surrounding country. The houses of the tribesmen were clustered together within the rath, which was also capacious enough to shelter the cattle in time of danger. Outside the rampart lay the arable land, while beyond stretched the ample pasture-ground. The ancient universality of the "rath" system is testified by the fact that over a thousand place-names embody the term "rath" with its variants "ra," or "rah." If "lis," "dun," "cahir" and "cashel," which have much the same significance, are added, it will be seen that the whole country must have been covered with fortified villages of this type. In the case of the cahirs and

cashels, which are to be found for the most part in hilly, stony country, the surrounding rampart was usually composed of piled stones.

The kings and greater chiefs seem to have had no fixed capitals, in the modern sense, and collected their taxes mainly by a kind of forced hospitality exacted from their subjects. There was little administrative or legislative machinery. The chiefs were elected by the people, but from the ranks of a particular family. The chief's successor, the *tanist*, was elected during the lifetime of the chief himself. Offences, even against the person, were punished by money fine, sure token of a weak executive. In such cases, if the fine is paid, it may be considered a purchase by the rich and powerful of a licence for wrong-doing. If the fine is not paid or not accepted, a bitter vendetta will be the probable outcome. There seems to have been practically no provision for legislative change. The relations of life were governed by the Brehon code of customary law, couched in obscure and archaic language, requiring for its elucidation a skilled professional interpreter.

Despite the frequency of internecine war, there was considerable freedom of movement from place to place. Large fairs were held periodically, which supplied the place of town markets and gave opportunities for social intercourse and the exchange of commodities. Coined money seems to have seldom passed in such transactions. Probably some form of barter took place, or the price was paid in cows or by ingots of precious metal. Not till about the middle of the eighth century does coined money begin to appear in the Irish records.² It was

² Joyce, *op. cit.*, II., 381.

probably introduced from the Continent. Even in much later times the charger of Art MacMurrough is described as having cost him, not any specified sum of money, but four hundred cows. The commodities for sale at fairs appear to have been food, clothes, horses, live stock, articles of gold and silver. The existence of roads is testified by the fact that chariots were used in war. During periods of peace trade must have passed along these channels. But it can hardly have been of very large extent. Each community was largely self-sufficing, lived on food of its own growing, spun its own wool, wove and dyed its own clothes, made its own brogues of soft untanned leather, built its houses of the material readiest to hand, smelted its iron, forged its tools and weapons. Except for luxuries, there was no need to buy in external markets. In a land full of such communities, often at war with each other, there is little scope for trade, which arises most readily where there is dissimilarity of conditions, as, for instance, where the town exchanges its manufactured goods for the food of the rural districts, or where the tropics give their characteristic products in return for those of the temperate zones. But a number of small similar agricultural settlements has hardly anything to exchange. When a glut of any commodity occurs, it is probably widespread, and *vice versa*. Even the fairs just mentioned seem to have been primarily social and athletic in their nature rather than commercial. They resemble the Olympic Games in Greece, rather than such great commercial fairs as Leipsic or Nijni Novgorod.

Nor does the evidence go to show the existence of a large foreign trade. There was considerable inter-

course by sea with Great Britain and the Continent, as indeed is shown, if no other proof existed, by the numerous missionary journeys of Irish saints. But there are no traces of such large trade between Ireland and other countries as undoubtedly existed between the various parts of the Roman Empire. There, unlike Ireland, numerous large towns provided a ready market, and the *pax Romana* enabled the merchant to venture his goods freely without fear of pillage on the journey. Furthermore, unless Irish trade were conducted in foreign vessels, it would be sadly hampered by the lack of adequate shipping. The craft most frequently mentioned in early Irish annals is the *curragh*, a sort of large canoe, covered by one, two or three layers of hides, ill adapted for long voyages or heavy freights. These frail vessels were used even for such purposes as military expeditions across channel, a course which would hardly have been adopted if there had been stouter vessels at hand in adequate numbers.³ The curragh of the present day, in use along the Connaught coast, which is a replica of the ancient craft, except that canvas is employed instead of hides for the covering, cannot keep the sea in very rough weather. It is natural, therefore, to infer that trade conducted over wide expanses of sea under such perilous conditions would be small in total volume and would consist in articles of luxury or refinement, which would be very valuable in proportion to their bulk, rich clothes, weapons of special design or quality, wine, salt, jewellery, slaves. The return cargoes were probably mainly skins, hides, wool, and dried or salted fish. Ireland at

³ Joyce, *op. cit.*, II., 422—433.

this period was probably at much the same stage of economic development as England under the Anglo-Saxons, or Germany in the times of Tacitus. Its achievements were rather in the domain of literature and the arts, than in commerce or industry, and in trade it was far behind such countries as Gaul or Italy.

The coming of the Northmen in the ninth century produced very considerable changes. Originally mere raiders and buccaneers, they became colonists and merchants, founded cities and became the carriers of sea-borne trade. This process commenced when they first began to winter in the country, planting their stockaded forts on defensible positions beside rivers or estuaries, usually as far upstream as their shallow-draught vessels could penetrate. Dublin on its hill almost enclosed by the Liffey and its tributary, the Poddle; Waterford and Wexford with narrow fronts on the landward side and their rear protected by broad expanses of water; Cork and Limerick on river islands open toward the sea, but secured from land attack by marshes and treacherous channels; these in their origin are typical Norse strongholds. But by their settling the invaders lost the great advantage of surprise. Coming from the sea without warning, they had been able to burn and plunder before native forces could gather to offer resistance. By the time the clan was mustered for battle, the monastery would have been sacked and the raiders, with their booty aboard, would be pulling out to sea. But fixed settlements on Irish soil were more accessible, and raiding was less likely to go unpunished. The forts then became trading stations, for which purpose they were by their maritime position eminently qualified. The Norse

galley was a better sea boat than the curragh, being built entirely of wood. It carried a larger crew and could accommodate a considerable quantity of freight. Thus the traffic overseas came increasingly to be conducted through the Norse settlements and by the Norse ships. This had the effect of bringing the country into closer contact with its neighbours, particularly with the other Scandinavian settlements scattered throughout the northern seas. Ships went to Normandy, to the western English and Scottish coasts, the Hebrides, the Orkneys, Norway, even to Iceland. Ireland is no longer a remote country, as she had seemed to the Romans, beyond even far-away Britain. She is on an ocean highway, frequented by a trading and seafaring race. Money began to be generally used in this commerce. The palisaded Danish forts developed into the first Irish cities, walled towns, capable of standing a siege, and possessing the rudiments of municipal government. Dublin, for instance, had outside its walls and beside its harbour, a place for popular assemblage, like the *forum* of the Romans and the *agora* of the Greeks. The commodities, which formed the subject of this seaborne traffic, were much the same as in earlier times, but the evidence goes to show that the volume of export and import was greatly increased. Most of the Norse towns were on the eastern coast, facing Great Britain, and hence the trade was mostly with that country. Giraldus Cambrensis mentions the existence of a flourishing slave trade, particularly in children, from Bristol to Eastern Ireland.

It is probable that the increased intercourse between the two countries brought about by the voyages of the Danish merchants led to the participation of the Anglo-

Norman nobles in the struggles of contending parties in Ireland, and so eventually to the conquest of the country. The army of Strongbow, following, as armies generally do, an established trade route, passed from South Wales to the Danish cities of Wexford and Waterford, which it captured, and eventually settled itself firmly in another Danish city, Dublin, which, from its central position, was chosen as the capital.

The social and economic features of the regime set up in Ireland by the Anglo-Normans form an interesting and little-known chapter in history. For the first hundred years there is little detailed evidence. But towards the end of the thirteenth century the records of the courts of justice begin to be available, and it is possible to construct a picture of contemporary life. The first feature which calls for notice is the extent to which the new rulers had succeeded in consolidating their authority over the country. Leinster and Munster were almost entirely under the control of the Dublin government, which regularly sent its judges on a great circuit to such centres as Limerick, Tralee, Cork, Buttevant, Clonmel, Waterford, New Ross, Kilkenny, Kildare, Drogheda, Kells, Mullingar and Loughseudy (Ballymore, County Westmeath). Connaught was less effectively controlled, though Roscommon had been placed under a sheriff, and the town of Galway and the Archbishop of Tuam obeyed the writs of the Dublin courts. Ulster had been formed into an earldom, but at least three-quarters of the province remained independent under its native chiefs. The fortress of Carrickfergus and some settlements along the coasts of Antrim and Down were the chief possessions of the Earl

of Ulster in the North of Ireland. The primatial See of Armagh was also to some extent dependent on the English Crown. Donegal, Derry, Fermanagh, Tyrone, Cavan, Monaghan were unsubdued. Even in Leinster and Munster there were large tracts where the native Irish, protected by such natural obstacles as mountain, marsh or wood, defied all attempts at subjugation. By the accidents of position some of these districts lay athwart or on the flank of the chief roads through the country, so that it was easy to maintain an incessant guerrilla warfare, which rendered communication difficult and prevented the country from settling down. The mountains of Wicklow lay a short night march from the capital and on the flank of the road to Waterford. From their fastnesses the hill tribes could raid at will four of the richest counties in Ireland, Wexford, Carlow, Kildare and Dublin. In the midlands the bogs and moors of Leix and Offaly (the modern King's and Queen's Counties) stretched right across the roads to Cork and Limerick. Munster could show similar islets of independence. These conditions favoured the growth of feudal particularism, rather than the development of a strong unified central government.

Under these circumstances it is surprising to find that Anglo-Ireland under Edward I., limited in its territory and harassed by hostile neighbours, was nevertheless living under an ordered and methodical administrative system, evidently modelled on that of contemporary England. The descendants of Strongbow's captains had become great nobles ruling over large domains. The rank and file had become "free tenants" bound to follow their overlord in war and to render him services

or pay him a money rent, but not liable to further personal obligation. The Irish chiefs had been driven out by the invaders, or had been obliged to marry their daughters to Norman leaders, thus securing the inheritance to the stranger. The tribesmen remained in their ancient position, but suffered exactly the same depression in status that the Saxons of England had undergone at the Norman Conquest. They became agricultural serfs. Just as *nativus* in England was equivalent to *villein*, so also *Hibernicus* in mediæval Irish documents came to stand for serf. The full phrase, indeed, is *Hibernicus et servilis conditionis*, which implies, as is undoubtedly true, that there were some persons of Irish origin who were not serfs (Irish names, for instance, are to be found among the "free tenants" and among the town burgesses). But the full phrase is so rarely used that it is manifest that the term *Hibernicus* usually connoted servile condition.

The tenant of this grade was a person divested in a great measure of civil rights. He was practically denied access to the royal courts, and could only sue and be sued in the private court of his lord. He was tied to the soil and could not leave without his lord's permission. In some respects he seems to have been treated as a chattel, since compensation for injuries suffered by him was paid, not to the *Hibernicus* himself, but to his lord. On the other hand he could acquire and transmit property, and we find *Hibernici* engaging in trade and in possession of cattle and stacks of corn.⁴ Money rents were as usual among the *Hibernici* (or *betaghs*, as they were sometimes called)

⁴"Caleudar of Justiciary Rolls, Ireland, 1295—1303" (ed. Mills), pp. 116, 221.

as among the free tenants, but, unlike the latter, they were generally liable to perform certain services in addition. These varied from place to place, but a frequent form was the giving of a certain number of days' work, hoeing, ploughing or reaping at the busy times of the year. The clan system seems to have survived even in this subjugation, for we find associations of *betaghs* holding land in common and cultivating as joint tenants. In the Pipe Roll of the Exchequer for 1331, "The Omolryans, William Odouyr and their following," presumably a small Tipperary tribe, are described collectively as *Hibernici* of the Earl of Ulster.⁵

English and Irish serfdom, it will be seen, were closely analogous in their early history, but were very different in their later developments. In England serfdom was on the wane by the middle of the fourteenth century, and though never formally abolished, was practically extinct with the accession of the Tudors. In Ireland it seems to have shown much greater vitality, being probably fostered by the peculiar conditions of the country, with its distrustful minority of one race ruling over a discontented majority of another. Irish serfdom was nominally swept away by a proclamation of 1605,⁶ but long after that date its influence may be traced in the system of Irish land tenure. From this fact follow important consequences. Many of the strangest and saddest features in Irish economic history may possibly be explained by the consideration that the Irish peasant was for so many centuries a serf to the stranger. Low standards of living, backwardness of agriculture, miser-

⁵ 43rd Report Deputy Keeper of the Records (Ireland), p. 37.

⁶ Bonn, "Englische Kolonisation in Irland," I., 394.

able housing and equipment, reckless increase of population, fierce rebellion bloodily suppressed, outrage, ignorance, superstition, conservatism, these are characteristic of countries cultivated by serfs, and may be traced alike in the ancient history of England, France and Germany, and in the comparatively recent annals of Russia. The landowner has been divided from the cultivator, not merely by opposing material interests, but also by racial and religious animosities. Hence the economic history of rural Ireland tends to resemble the story of a great war rather than a record of gradual change and development.

The usual unit of local government in Anglo-Ireland as in England was the manor, or lordship, with its two tribunals, the court baron for deciding civil cases, particularly those relating to land tenure within the manor, and the court leet, for the punishment of petty criminal offences and the correction of nuisances. The representative of the lord presided over these courts, the free tenants furnished the juries which were often summoned to give the court the benefit of their personal and local knowledge, while to the serf, as has already been said, the limited arena of the manor courts represented, with a few exceptions, the whole sum of justice available in the case of disputes with each other or with the lord, or of offences against each other or against the community.⁷ In some cases the lord held but a single manor, in others he held several. Again a manor might be the property of the church. Most of the great sees were in possession of several, the bishop or archbishop

⁷ The Crown reserved to itself cognizance of pleas of rape, arson, forestalling, and treasure trove.

being considered the lord. There were also many in the hands of the monarch. Such names as Manor Street in Dublin and Waterford, and Manorhamilton in County Leitrim preserve the memory of some of these ancient subdivisions.

Somewhat similar in their organization to the manors were the "liberties" or exempt jurisdictions, withdrawn from the general control of the county authorities. They were usually the possession of a see or a great feudal lord, and, as in the case of Dublin, were often to be found just outside municipal boundaries. At Wexford, Trim, Carlow and other places the whole town formed a liberty. At Kilkenny the modern city represents the union of a secular "liberty" around the castle with the bishop's liberty of Irishtown around St. Canice's Cathedral. At Drogheda the municipality lay to the north of the Boyne, the "liberty" to the south ("Drogheda on the part of Uriel," or Louth, as opposed to "Drogheda on the part of Meath.").

Viewed from the economic aspect the manor bears a considerable resemblance to the common clan holding which it replaced. It is indeed, one might say, the clan holding fixed in a stable form. The pasture and wood remained common as before, but the arable land is no longer subject to a periodical redistribution. Holdings are permanent, transfer of property, when necessary, being effected in the court baron. The son inherits the father's land as a matter of course, subject however to the lord receiving his customary perquisites on such occasions. The manor is to a large extent self-sufficient, growing its own food, grinding its own corn into flour at a local mill, spinning and weaving its own

wool into cloth, just as the clan did. Unlike the clan, however, the manor conducts its affairs on a very exact and regular money basis. It keeps elaborate accounts, some of which are still preserved, showing to the smallest halfpenny the incomings and outgoings.⁸ Its rent-rolls are full of minute detail. The land is cultivated on a system of rotation of crops, with a frequent alternation of fallow. Oats are grown more often than any other grain, with wheat, however, a very good second, the proportion being roughly, so far as can be judged from the relative frequency of mention in the mediæval rolls, oats 22, wheat 19, barley 5.

Taken as a whole, Ireland at this time had an exportable surplus of food. More than once the armies of Edward I. and Edward II. campaigning in Scotland or Wales, were provisioned from Ireland, receiving, as is shown by entries on the Exchequer Pipe Rolls, large quantities of corn and flour, dried fish, pease and other victuals. There was a thriving trade in corn with the ports of south-western France, then in English possession, the return cargo being usually wine. Corn was grown very largely in the counties of Dublin, Louth and Meath.

Again and again this corn-growing in the midlands presents itself and is quite a sufficient answer to those who speak of the country as destined by nature to be a cattle-run. It is possible even to make deductions as to the relative productivity of the land. In 1297 land near Duleek is stated to have produced 2 crannocs (about $\frac{1}{2}$ ton) of wheat to the acre (probably the Irish acre is

⁸ "Account Rolls of Holy Trinity, Dublin" (ed. Mills).

meant) and approximately the same yield of oats.⁹ This is less than half the average produce of a similar area at present.

The relative unimportance of manufactures, as compared with farming, is shown by the high value set on manufactured articles as compared with farm produce. For instance, an ell (1½ yards) of cloth is equal in value to 1½ bushels (about 80 lbs.) of corn, and the cost of a plough iron is estimated at half the price of a bullock.¹⁰ Hides and wool were also cheap and plentiful, and were a profitable source of commerce. Anglo-Ireland, in short, towards the close of the thirteenth century was in a situation very like that of the American colonies two hundred years ago, or Canada or Australia in more recent times. Its farming and agriculture were prosperous and productive, its industries non-existent or in their infancy, its towns small and widely separated, almost all on the sea or on navigable rivers, its whole life permeated by the ideals and institutions of the home country. Ireland is by no means the only country where colonists have blundered through ignorance or misunderstanding of native customs and feelings, or have failed to resist the temptation to exploit or oppress.

On the whole it seems likely that if a succession of rulers of the calibre of Edward I. had managed the affairs of Ireland, much misery and bloodshed might have been saved. For the first time in Irish history a strong, unified, methodically-organized central government had been set up. Order had been established over the greater part of the country, a definite legal and

⁹ "Calendar of Justiciary Rolls, Ireland, 1295-1303," pp. 106, 107.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 19, 144, 225.

administrative system had been put in force, commerce and agriculture had begun to prosper. It is true, of course, that all this was alien to the country, and introduced from outside, yet it might conceivably have been made acceptable to the Irish people by similar methods to those which, under like circumstances, succeeded in Wales. The governors of Ireland, though, after the manner of their time, prone to use the heavy hand of repression, were not incapable of enlightened policy, as is shown among other things, by their attitude towards the towns.

Several municipalities possessed royal charters and were permitted to elect their own magistrates. The king's writs were not executed within their limits, save through the medium of "the mayor and bailiffs" or "the provost and bailiffs." They paid their taxes in a fixed sum, collected by local officers and presented to the royal exchequer by the chief magistrate acting for the city. Indirect taxation, which, in the form of customs, furnished the greater part of the royal revenue, was collected at the harbour towns by persons specially elected for that purpose. Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Waterford, Drogheda, enjoyed a considerable degree of financial and administrative independence, and showed their gratitude by maintaining, often in very difficult circumstances, a tradition of loyalty to the English connection. If the English kings had not, after the death of Edward I. and the defeat of his son at Bannockburn, abandoned the plan of making the British Isles into one United Kingdom, and gone adventuring on the Continent, Ireland might have been conciliated and consolidated. What might have been easily done in the

fourteenth century was not really attempted until the sixteenth, when two centuries of strife had made conciliation hopeless. The sore had run too long to be readily healed.

The prolonged invasion of Edward Bruce (1315—1318) carried desolation over Ireland from Antrim to Limerick, and reduced the country to a state resembling that of Belgium and north-eastern France at the close of the Great European War. Houses and tools were destroyed, workmen slain, the crops carried off or ruined, towns burnt or so shattered by war that, as in the cases of Dublin and Drogheda, they had to be restored by grants of money from the State.¹¹ The central authority was weak and distracted. The native clans became daily more and more aggressive, and feudal anarchy raised its head within the Pale. There are continual campaigns all along the boundary line, and fierce private war within the borders. In 1330 the justiciar took an army to Kilkenny “to establish peace between the Earl of Ulster and the Le Poers and Barries of the one part and the Earls of Ermund and Dessemon’ and William de Birmingham of the other.”¹² The great lords had adopted the Irish custom of exacting maintenance for themselves and their followers, and the colony groaned under the burden of supporting large bodies of troops. Many of the Anglo-Irish nobles, finding themselves isolated in Connaught or West Munster, in the midst of a Celtic population and far from any settlement of Englishmen, took the path of least resistance and adopted the Irish

¹¹ Exchequer Pipe Roll, Ireland, 16 Edw. II. (42nd Report Deputy Keeper of Records).

¹² Pipe Roll, 2 Edw. III. (43rd Report Deputy Keeper of Records).

language and customs. Taxes were unpaid, the law could not be enforced. The Pale, as the part of Ireland subject to English authority was called, grew smaller day by day, its intercourse with England was hindered by Scotch, Breton and Spanish attacks on its merchant fleet, its inhabitants fled in every ship that sailed. The distant monarchs were too much occupied with wars in France, and later with civil war at home, to be able to attend to the affairs of Ireland. By the end of the Wars of the Roses, the country stood much as it was before the invasion of Strongbow, Irish or Hibernicized chiefs enjoying power everywhere, and the strangers, then Scandinavians, now English, holding the seaports and their immediate vicinity.

This period has been regarded by Mrs. Alice Green in a well-known book¹³ as marking the resurrection of the native element in Irish affairs. Politically and socially this is no doubt true. The English power was reduced to a very low ebb. Only four counties could be relied on to obey the orders of the Dublin authorities. Even so, however, the Government, feeble as it was, was probably stronger than any one of its opponents. An Irish alliance under a leader of the type of Robert Bruce might easily have swept the country of the English. But such a leader never appeared. The energies of the great lords were spent in internecine feuds and private wars. So long as the ports held firm, and Dublin and its immediate neighbourhood were maintained, an eventual reconquest was probable. Socially Irish ideas were triumphant, as is shown very remarkably by despairing efforts to stay their progress, such as the

¹³ "The Making of Ireland and Its Undoing."

famous Statute of Kilkenny in 1367, with its futile provisions against colonists using the Irish language, dress or mode of riding, giving their children Irish foster-parents, intermarrying with the Irish, entertaining bards or pipers and the like. This was the time when it was complained that the English settlers had become *Hibernis ipsis Hiberniores*, more Irish than the Irish themselves.

But in the economic world it may be doubted whether the period showed any striking resurrection. Neither commerce nor agriculture can flourish in an atmosphere of unsettlement, such as prevailed from 1318 to 1485. Apart from isolated incidents, which really prove nothing, the whole trend of the documentary evidence lies in the opposite direction. The interior of the country was in such a dangerous state that trade could not pass by inland routes, and traffic had to go by sea. Cork, Kill-saile, Youghal, Waterford, Wexford, and Kilkenny, in 1450 saw devastation carried so close to their walls that they had no prospect of obtaining food locally and were permitted by special statute to import corn by sea from Dublin and Drogheda.¹⁴ Even the sea, though safer than the land, was not without its perils, for we find the merchants of Dublin, Drogheda and Chester in 1455 combining to freight a ship to go to Iceland with goods suitable for the inhabitants and bring back in return a cargo of fish.¹⁵ Evidently the Irish Sea was not a place to linger in, or it would have been much simpler for these towns to have fished their local waters than to send ships on a voyage of nearly one thousand miles to

¹⁴ "Statute Rolls of Ireland, Henry VI.," p. 171.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 697.

Iceland. Export of corn to foreign countries could no longer be allowed, as food supplies were short and there was constant danger of famine. Coin was hoarded or carried away by travellers, and its place taken by debased issues. The city of Limerick was at one time at least fifteen years in arrear with its taxes. Land went out of cultivation, as no one could sow with any reasonable certainty of being permitted to reap. These are not the signs of prosperity. Whatever may be said of the period 1200—1315, it can hardly be maintained that the period 1318—1485 was one of economic advance. Even where the strife was not between colonist and native, bitter local feuds and enmities kept the land in disorder. Butlers fought pitched battles with Geraldines in the South, O'Neills contended with O'Donnells in the North.

The seaport towns alone maintained a precarious existence, protected by their fortifications from sudden attack and secured from blockade or siege by the open approach on the seaward side. Markets were held under their walls at which the inhabitants traded, somewhat nervously, it would appear, and under considerable precautions, with the people of the surrounding country, whether English or Irish. At this period the towns were to be considered as small manufacturing centres, rather than depots for commerce. Conditions, both at home and abroad made transport of goods to distant markets difficult and uncertain, thus checking both import and export. Each locality was thrown on its own resources and found its advantage in working up materials ready to hand. The hides, horns, wood and wool brought in from the surrounding country were manufactured by the townsfolk into harness, drinking-

cups, stools, embroidered mantles and the like, and sold again to the countrymen at a profit, or exchanged, either directly or through the medium of money, for the food, of which the townsmen stood in need, and which they were unable to produce for themselves. So such crafts as weaving, shoe-making and carpentering came to play a prominent part in urban life. The weavers of Dublin, for instance, received in 1446 a royal charter empowering them to establish a guild having power to regulate matters connected with that craft and to exercise jurisdiction over persons practising it in the city or within six miles of its precincts.¹⁶ Other crafts obtained similar privileges and were able to take their stand beside the older and more powerful merchant guilds. Since such privileges as those conferred by the weavers' charter practically made the guild an *imperium in imperio*, so far as the municipality was concerned, the government of the city could only be carried on by the co-operation of the guilds, and it is not surprising that they soon came to control the municipal authority. At Dublin, for instance, the franchise could only be exercised by members of the city guilds.

It is not easy to trace the fate of the manorial system in the districts where the Irish triumph was complete. Such evidence as there is goes to show that, the lord and the tenants being either killed or fugitives, the conquering chief naturally stepped into the lord's place, and the tribesmen, according to their degree, received estates under him. The serfs, who would usually be akin to the victorious tribe, were probably left unmolested. It is likely that the Brehon

¹⁶ W. C. Stubbs in "Proc. R. Society of Antiq. (I.)," vol. XLIX., p. 60.

law, as expounded by the chief's private judge, was adopted as the code governing land tenure within the bounds of the former manor. Courts baron and courts leet were swept away for the time.

CHAPTER II.

Plantation and Confiscation

With the accession of the Tudors the pendulum swings once more in the opposite direction. The new dynasty soon showed its intention to reconquer the almost lost dependency. It was successful, but at a terrible cost. Ireland, after another protracted struggle of a hundred years, was subdued from end to end, and the authority of the English monarch was everywhere recognized. But the strife had left terrible scars on the country. Devastation and famine had, after the manner of the time, been used as a military measure to enforce submission. Religious animosities had been added to the causes of division, already sufficiently numerous. But, perhaps worst of all, the victors had embarked on a policy which involved a considerable amount of dispossession. Seeing the old English settlements overrun or fallen into decay, they endeavoured to re-Anglicise, wherever opportunity served, the method adopted being that of planting colonies. The territory of defeated chiefs was confiscated, and English settlers were brought in. This course seems to have aroused far greater hostility than the depression of status from free tribesman to *Hibernicus* or serf, which had accompanied the Anglo-Norman conquest. Degradation was a less evil than eviction. The Tudor governors were determined to apply English law to Ireland and to disregard existing

native customs. But it was extremely difficult to fit the tribal landowner into the framework of English law. The lawyers hardly knew whether to regard him as a freeholder (though a freeholder whose holding changed every two or three years, was a person scarcely contemplated by English law) or as a tenant at will. If he were no more than a tenant at will, his tenancy could be determined by the chief, and thus, when the independent chiefs were in time replaced by men more subservient to the English authority, it became an easy matter to expel tribesmen from the holding of land and to replace them by colonists.

The first notable occasion on which this colonising policy was carried into effect was the planting of Leix and Offaly under Philip and Mary. In 1556 the Irish Parliament passed statutes declaring that the territories in question were the property of the Crown and giving power to the Lord Lieutenant to dispose of them to such English or Irish grantees as he chose.¹ It is likely that the holdings of the tribesmen were left undisturbed at first and that only the lands of the chiefs and leaders, most of whom, as a result of the war, were dead, in prison, or in exile, were confiscated and assigned to new holders. But the tribesmen of O'Conor and O'More had been independent too long to endure quietly the spectacle of strangers in the place of those whom they had known and followed. A continual vendetta raged between them and the new settlers, flaring into rebellion whenever opportunity served. As usually happens with vendettas, the feud grew fiercer as the years went by. The struggle became a fight to the death, which was only ended

¹ 3 & 4 Philip and Mary, c. 1 & 2 (I.).

by the almost complete extinction of the clans and their replacement by English or Anglo-Irish planters. Thus the central low-lying lands of Ireland became King's and Queen's Counties and were made shire land, while in further commemoration of the ruling monarchs the chief forts planted in the new counties were named Philipstown and Maryborough. The mountain country of Wicklow was brought under control a little later and made into a county, but here, though the chiefs fell from power, there was little or no confiscation, and accordingly but little opposition to the new regime. This was fortunate for the Government, as a desperate resistance might have been maintained for many years on the wild hillsides and in the tangled woody ravines of that district. The politic Elizabethan statesmen, though often hard and unscrupulous in their dealings with the chiefs, were usually careful in the economic sphere to avoid any measures which would antagonize the common people. They confiscated the property of those who died in rebellion, but pardoned the survivors. Even in the case of landowners who had died while resisting the Queen's authority, the estates were often granted to sons or near relatives.² In the break up of the clan system the individual tribesmen were recognized as owners of their holdings, though they were of course obliged to submit to the English, not the Brehon, law relating to land tenure.

Sir John Davies gives an interesting account of the method by which an Irish chieftaincy was transmuted into an Anglo-Irish lordship in the earlier years of King James I. He states that the surrender of his rights,

² W. F. T. Butler, "Confiscation in Irish History," p. 34.

when offered by the chief, was not immediately accepted, but that a commission was appointed to inquire into (1) the quantity and limits of the land over which the chief's power extended, (2) the amounts held by the chief in demesne, and by his tenants and followers respectively, (3) the customs, duties and services yearly received by the chief from lands held by tenants and followers. The lands found to be the chief's personal possession were then granted to him, while the "Irish duties, as *Cosherings, Sessings* (Cessings), *Rents of Butter and Oatmeale*, and the like" were valued in terms of money and charged as a yearly rent payable by the tenants to the former chief. The tenants were confirmed in their possession subject to these money payments.³ This system, which seems to have been modelled on that of the Elizabethans, was equitable enough, and if it had been maintained and administered honestly throughout Ireland during the whole of James I.'s reign, there would in all likelihood have been no great uprising in 1641. But a large part of Ireland, including two-thirds of the newly-conquered province of Ulster, did not receive the benefits of such a wise and conciliatory policy.

But for the rise of religious animosities, the Elizabethans might possibly have succeeded in placating, as well as in subduing Ireland. Their successors in the following reign committed the blunder of adding economic to religious grievances over a great part of Ireland. During the reigns of the Tudors the province of Ulster had gradually lost its independence. The two most prominent native chiefs, O'Donnell and O'Neill,

³ Sir John Davies, "A Discoverie &c.," p. 277.

after obstinate struggles marked by many vicissitudes, had been forced to acknowledge the supremacy of the English monarchs. Their ancient chieftaincies were converted into the earldoms of Tirconnell and Tyrone. In 1607 the two earls fled the country, fearing arrest on a charge of conspiracy. The lawyers of King James I. held that this flight justified the Crown in confiscating their vast estates covering the greater part of four Ulster counties, Armagh, Derry (then called Coleraine), Donegal and Tyrone. This action was one of very dubious equity, for flight, unsupported by more direct evidence, is no legal proof, though it may imply a strong presumption of guilt. However it is likely that the King's advisers were anxious to execute a plan for the plantation of Ulster and were glad to avail themselves of the clear field now left for their operations by the flight of the earls. The counties of Cavan and Fermanagh were also included in the scheme, their chiefs having died in rebellion.

But the spirit of this plantation was unlike any that had gone before. In Leix and Offaly the clansmen had at first been undisturbed. The Elizabethans had been careful not to provoke the common man. But now all the occupiers of land, whether high or low, lost their rights and were liable to expulsion in favour of English or Scotch colonists. The "lots" offered were of large dimensions; 2000, 1500 and 1000 acres. The largest denomination was reserved for English and Scotch undertakers, who were to be under compact to people their estates with persons belonging to those two nationalities. The next largest lots were set aside for those who had served the Crown in Ireland, the "servitors." These must be

Protestants, and must only take tenants of that religion, though they might be of either English, Irish or Scotch nationality. Only on the smallest of the three classes of lots could tenants be admitted without any restriction as to birth or religious belief. It is evident that the execution of such a policy as this involved a great uprooting of the population. Those unprovided in the settlement were given a fixed date by which they were to depart with their goods and chattels. It was this element of clearance which marked, from one point of view, the success of the Ulster plantation. The town and county of Derry, for instance, became strongly British, the companies of London having such large estates and such extensive influence there that the very name was changed so as to incorporate that of the English capital. Other parts became predominantly Scotch in nationality and Presbyterian in religion. Only about one-ninth of the confiscated area was allowed to remain in the hands of the ancient Catholic proprietors. But, on the other hand, it may be doubted whether such triumphs as these were not dearly bought by the bitter resentment of the expelled Irish, who in most cases did not travel far from their ancient homes, but settled at some neighbouring bogside or stony mountain glen, to snatch a scanty living from inhospitable soil, brood over their wrongs and await an opportunity of revenge and reinstatement.

Furthermore, there were inevitable difficulties in the way of removing a population on such a scale as this. Many of the "undertakers," who received assignments of land, found it no easy task to induce an adequate number of English and Scotch settlers to accompany

them. Or again the restless ne'er-do-wells, who are always attracted by schemes of colonisation in distant countries, grew weary of the life and drifted away, leaving vacant tenancies, which the landlord would be tempted to fill by allowing the return of the former occupants, who were only too anxious to come back. There was a considerable amount of evasion of the strict provisions relating to the taking of Irish tenants, and eventually the Government made concessions on the point, allowing a quarter of the land to be allotted to Irishmen under certain conditions. Thus, while the "plantation" was a success in Derry and Armagh, it was only a half success in Tyrone and Fermanagh, and was a complete failure in Donegal and Cavan. The counties of Down and Antrim were not included in the plantation and had never been the subject of any large plan for State colonisation. They had gradually been brought under British influence, partly from the effect of English settlements along the coast dating from the time of the mediæval earldom of Ulster, partly from Scottish infiltration from the opposite coast. To sum up, the effect of the great plantation was the establishment of a solid block of British influence in the North and a complete change in the character of the province. From being the last independent stronghold of the Celtic race, it became a centre of British power. On the other hand the manner in which this change was effected left so many bitter memories that the two nationalities in Ulster have never coalesced and remain to this day distinct, side by side, but not mingling.

Before a generation had passed, the smouldering discontents of the dispossessed Ulstermen burst forth in

a great rebellion, that of 1641, the fiercest and most dangerous, perhaps, in all Irish history. It is significant that among its foremost contrivers are to be found representatives of almost all the clans which had suffered by plantation. The leader was an O'More of Leix; the chief commander was an O'Neill of Tyrone; Maguires of Fermanagh and O'Reillys of Cavan took a prominent part. In a week nearly all Ulster was in the hands of the rebels, who soon began to wreak their vengeance on the settlers, expelling them with as scant ceremony as they themselves had been accorded. Many were stripped and turned out helpless in midwinter to find their way as best they might to the nearest loyal town, often perishing by the wayside of hunger or cold. There was also a number of deliberate murders, some aggravated by extreme cruelty. Many of the refugees fled to England and the stories they told aroused a fury of indignation, which could find no outlet at the time, but showed itself subsequently in further massacres and confiscations. It is a dreary story, but it must be told if the agrarian problems of modern Ireland are to be fully understood.

Before the outbreak could be quelled, the great strife of Cavalier and Roundhead had commenced, and for many years Ireland was a prey to three, if not four, contending parties, Royalists, Parliamentarians, Irish Catholics, and invading Scotch Presbyterians. The parliament in England raised money and men for the war by promises of estates in Ireland forfeited by rebellion. In 1649 Cromwell came across the Irish Sea and in a short, sharp campaign overbore all resistance and established the Parliamentary power in Ireland. Five

years later the promises made to those whose assistance had helped the now triumphant party to its victory were redeemed and the great Cromwellian confiscation and transplantation took place. The principles, on which it was based, are somewhat complicated, but it is evident that in the eyes of the new rulers, the Irish Catholics bore the chief share of blame for all that had occurred, and they were accordingly treated with far greater severity than their Protestant fellow-countrymen. Catholics who could not prove that they had shown "constant good affection" towards the Parliament, were to lose one-third of their estates and to get lands, equal in value to the other two-thirds, wherever the Parliament might appoint. Protestants were not required to prove *constant* good affection, only that they had rendered service when opportunity offered and, if unable to reach this much less exacting standard, were to be punished by the loss of one-fifth, not one-third, of their estates.⁴ Amid the kaleidoscopic variations of the campaigns in Ireland, with one party in possession to-day, another to-morrow, a steady, consistent loyalty to the Parliament would have exposed the loyalist sooner or later to loss of life, liberty or property. It will be noted, too, that the onus of proof was thrown on the landowner; he was to prove himself innocent or be punished, not to escape punishment unless his innocence was clearly shown before a tribunal. Outside the city of Dublin only twenty-six Catholic landowners were able to prove "constant good affection."⁵ The great mass of the Catholic gentry was thus liable to at least the penalty

⁴ W. F. T. Butler, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 132.

of one-third, or, if they had been prominent in the early rebellion or the later opposition to the Parliament, to the loss of two-thirds or to total confiscation. These punishments, severe as they were, might have been regarded as equivalent to money fines, and have been accepted on the principle that "the loser pays," were it not that they were coupled with eviction, the one thing of all others most detested by the Irishman. Those Catholic landlords, who came under the ban of the Parliament, were compelled to remove across the Shannon, there to receive in Clare or in the wilds of Connaught the equivalent of two-thirds, or less, of their former estates. The records are extant and make pitiful reading, one party of these forced emigrants consisting of a palsied old man with his wife and one maid-servant, another of a boy and girl aged eleven and eight, with apparently no attendants. The details of the amount of stock possessed by the transplanted persons throw a vivid light on the depletion caused by the wars. A viscount has no more substance for his support than 16 acres of corn, 4 cows, 24 sheep, 2 pigs and 5 horses, that is to say, is on the same level as a rather small Irish farmer of the present day. Another peer possesses 3 cows, 3 horses and 6 pigs. Into the place left vacant by these removals the Parliament settled the "soldiers and adventurers" to whom it had promised Irish lands in return for military service or advances of money.

Such was the celebrated transplantation to Connaught. It must be remembered that it affected chiefly the aristocracy. The actual labourer or tiller of the soil was left undisturbed, on the ground that his services would be required by the new landlords. For him the

proceedings involved a change of masters, not a removal.

After the Restoration in 1660, those who had lost estates in the previous war, began to look for reinstatement. But the Cromwellians took up so threatening an attitude on any attempt to interfere with their acquisitions that the King feared to provoke a rebellion if he proceeded to extreme measures, and the matter was eventually settled by a compromise, the party in possession giving up one-third of their holdings to furnish compensation for those persons loyal to the King who had been dispossessed. But this allocation was not nearly enough for the purpose. Indeed the whole trouble of the time was due to the fact that there were more claimants on Irish land than the total area of the island could possibly accommodate. Probably between one-third and one-half of the soil of Ireland changed hands at this period.

But the era of confiscation was not yet over. The triumph of William of Orange was marked by another similar proceeding, on a much smaller scale, however, and conducted with more regard for equity. The State was required to prove guilt to the satisfaction of a jury, before confiscation could take place. The land forfeited in this manner is stated to have amounted to about 1,000,000 Irish acres, or about 1,600,000 English acres, about one-thirteenth of the total area of the country. The chief sufferers, again, were the Catholic gentry, who had been enthusiastic in their support of King James. Some families, which had recovered lands at the Restoration, lost them again at the Revolution. The clans had been broken, their chiefs replaced by Protestant and Catholic planters, then under Cromwell the Catholic

planters themselves had lost most of their estates, only the more fortunate of them being able to recover at the Restoration. Lastly came the Williamite confiscation to root out even those who had regained their property under Charles II. In the succeeding century a Catholic landlord was a rare phenomenon in rural Ireland, and even to this day most of the large landowners are Protestants.

The economic results of this period of expropriation are noteworthy. The introduction of new landlords, strange to the country, alien in blood and in religion, did not make for rural peace or agricultural prosperity. Such middle-class as had existed outside the towns had been ruined by the war, even though not usually affected by confiscation, and had disappeared, leaving the characteristic feature of eighteenth century Ireland, the *grand seigneur* landlord confronted only by an ill-educated, ill-equipped, often-oppressed and starving peasantry.

CHAPTER III.

The Land and its Produce 1600—1800

Towards the close of the Tudor period details as to the economic condition of Ireland begin to be more abundant. The Elizabethan State papers contain many references, and amid the literary activity and general stirring of curiosity characteristic of the time, English writers of note begin to describe for the benefit of their countrymen the manners and customs of the island, which was being subdued so slowly and at so heavy a cost both in blood and treasure. It is true, of course, that these books were usually written under the influence of religious and national prejudice, or even, as in the case of the poet Spenser, under the smart of severe personal loss. If the native historians had taken more interest in economic matters, we might be in the position of having heard both sides, and so come to a fairer conclusion. Unfortunately there is not much neutral foreign testimony. Such as there is tends to confirm the Elizabethans, but may perhaps be discounted as having been written by men who travelled under English auspices and were, consciously or not, imbued with the ideas of their hosts and inclined to view Ireland through English spectacles. But the Spaniard Cuellar, a refugee from the Armada, who spent some three months in the household of MacClancy, a minor chief in Leitrim, being kindly treated and even taking part

in the defence of a castle against the Queen's troops, can hardly be considered to have come under English influence. Yet his evidence is much to the same effect.¹ When authors of varying types, writing at different times and speaking of matters which came under their own observation, show a substantial agreement, it is absurd to dismiss them as a pack of false witnesses, telling a prepared story. It is necessary rather to strip away the biased statements and see what substratum of truth lies beneath.

The picture of Ireland thus obtained is of a country still in the main pastoral, but with a pastoralism adapted to the troubled conditions of the time. The cattle were light and active; in time of need they could be driven long distances to places of refuge without foundering by the wayside. Even in peace time they were not allowed to remain in the fields at night, but were brought for safety into fortified enclosures called bawns, usually under the walls of castles. But corn was also grown, where the country was sufficiently peaceable to permit of its being successfully harvested by the sower. In the Irish quarters the corn most commonly cultivated was oats. The Irish ate one meal in the day, composed of oat-cake, made savoury with butter or some other milk product. Their drink was sour milk. Another article of diet, probably midway between solid and liquid, was *bonnyclabber*, prepared from sour curds. Besides oats, barley must have been cultivated, for whiskey, or usquebaugh, is beginning to be in general use as a cordial or stimulant. Probably the earliest reference to Irish whiskey in literature is to be found in

¹ Bagwell, "Ireland Under the Tudors," III., p. 185.

the Annals of Loch Cé under the year 1405,² when it is stated to have caused the death of Richard Mac-Raghnaill. To him, says the chronicler, punning on the word "usquebaugh," which means "water of life," it was a "water of death." The manufacture of whiskey was a domestic industry, carried on in much the same manner as the production of *poteen*, or illicitly-distilled spirit, in the present day. Meat was only eaten at feasts. Cows were too valuable as milk-givers to be slaughtered for food, except under dire necessity. Houses were built of wattle and clay and roofed with thatch. The Anglo-Irish method of life was, as might be expected, midway between that of the English and the "mere (or pure) Irish." They grew wheat for bread, and their beverage was a weak ale, made apparently from unmaltered grain, not, like the English beer, from malt and hops.

Throughout the seventeenth century and well into the eighteenth this pastoralism continues to dominate Ireland. In the first place ranching, rather than corn-growing, is the natural resource of those whose titles are insecure and who live under the menace of disturbance. No costly draining, fencing or manuring is required. In the mild damp climate of Ireland grass grows of itself, flocks and herds soon increase prodigiously, and, unlike cornfields, are transportable, easily protected, and return a profit on a minimum of expenditure. The planters and grantees of the Stuart period, knowing their possession uncertain, were impelled to take their gain in the quickest and easiest way, hence the increase of ranching.

² Vol. II., p. 113.

Similar considerations, it may be noted, led them to sell the timber on their lands, thus completing the destruction of the great forests, which had once covered the land, but have now so entirely vanished, that in many parts the eye may scan to the very horizon without seeing a tree. In some districts even the hedgerows have gone and have been replaced by grass-topped stone walls. The soldiers of Elizabeth cut down many of the woods, in order to deprive the Irish of their shelter and protection, and the landlords sooner or later sold all that remained, not one in a score planting where he had felled.

The reigns of James I. and Charles I. saw the rise of a new feature in cattle-farming. Animals were raised for the production of meat as well as milk. The bullock begins to be as prominent as the cow. As the native Irish never had been meat-eaters to any extent, and the urban Anglo-Irish were not sufficiently numerous to provide an extensive market, the production was necessarily for export. Dr. Alice Murray states that in the year 1620 100,000 cattle were exported from Ireland to England, forty to fifty shillings a head being paid for them.³ This is an extraordinarily large figure, when one considers that the ship of that date could hardly accommodate more than 50 beasts, and that no less than 2000 voyages would be required for the conveyance of so large a number. It has been estimated that at the outbreak of the 1641 Rebellion the cattle and live stock of Ireland were worth £4,000,000. Eight years of war reduced the herds to a tithe of their former size, but as soon as peace was restored, they increased once more

³ "Commercial Relations between England and Ireland," p. 23.

and the export trade resumed its activity. In the years immediately following the Restoration the average export was 60,000 head. The type of animal exported was the same as that which may be encountered in large numbers on the quays of any Irish seaport, the lean "store cattle," destined to be fattened across channel and sold within a few months as "prime English beef." However, this trade was destined to receive a severe check. The jealousy of the English breeders was aroused, and in 1666 an Act was passed at Westminster absolutely prohibiting the import into England from Ireland of live cattle, sheep, swine, beef, pork, and bacon, except when required for necessary provisions.⁴

This statute was not passed without an obstinate and long-continued struggle. It was carried against the advice of every responsible Irishman and, it may be added, every Englishman with a personal knowledge of Irish affairs. The landed interest in the counties, which fattened cattle for the London market, opposed the measure, though it was favoured by the North of England, then a competitor with Ireland in the production of store cattle. It was pointed out that if discrimination was to be exercised against one part of the King's dominions as compared with another, the Government might just as logically pass special measures in favour of one English county as against another. On the other hand the political enemies of Ormond, the great Royalist Lord Lieutenant, had been strong in support, caring little of the damage to Ireland if they could discredit the powerful Viceroy. The immediate effect on Ireland was ruinous. England, being larger, more populous,

⁴ 18 & 19, Car. II., c. 2 (E.).

and lying so near at hand, must always be Ireland's best and readiest customer for any surplus commodity. Now that market was peremptorily closed against the very article of commerce which Ireland could produce most easily and in the largest quantity. An effort was made to discover alternative outlets for Irish cattle. Some cargoes were sent to Holland, but it was found that the voyage was so long and local competition from Holstein so keen that there was little hope of establishing a profitable trade.

Eventually, after an inevitable period of loss and stagnation, it was discovered that the best solution of the problem lay in fattening the animals at home and exporting them to the British colonies and to foreign countries in the form of salt provisions. The position of Ireland as an Atlantic outpost, beside the chief trade routes going southward and westward, gave it an advantage in this respect. It was well placed for commerce with Spain, Portugal, the western ports of France, Canada, the American colonies and the West Indies. Its provisions were so cheap and good that they were gladly received by all these countries, and, furthermore, the Irish seaports, particularly those on the south coast, came to be victualling stations for the naval and mercantile fleets. Ships sailing from English ports to Bombay, New York or Barbadoes called at Cork or Waterford to take in stores for the long journey of three to six months that lay before them. This trade was in the end much more profitable than the one it had replaced, for it gave employment in many ways. A number of coopers, butchers and salters were directly engaged. The residuary offals gave the town popula-

tion a cheap, nourishing food. The killing of the animals at home preserved such by-products as horns, hoofs and hides, and provided raw material for tanners, glue-makers and the like. Now that Ireland has again swung back to sending out her cattle "on the hoof," it may be well to point out these comparative advantages of a dead meat trade. It may also be remarked that the transport of carcases instead of live animals saves ship room, and therefore freightage, which is likely to be a heavy charge for many years to come. Besides it is much more humane to the unfortunate animals themselves, as anyone who has crossed on a cattle-boat in a rough sea can testify.

Another result of the Cattle Acts, completely unforeseen by those who passed them, was a severe check to English trade with Ireland, proportionate to the diminution of Irish outward trade. All traffic is an exchange, and it naturally followed that, when England refused to accept the commodity which then formed three-fourths of Ireland's surplus production, Ireland had so much the less to offer in return for English goods, and could not purchase nearly so much as before. She was obliged to turn to foreign countries and to use her cattle, dead or alive, to buy in their markets the necessities, which before 1666 had been bought in England. Thus the prohibition had a markedly estranging economic effect, even apart from the political resentments, which it aroused.

A further result was the diversion of stock-raising from cattle to sheep. At this period, as in Australia within living memory, sheep were reared not so much for their mutton as for their wool, and, although the

export of wool to foreign countries was prohibited, the English cloth industries were able to absorb a large amount of the Irish production. By these two expedients, the development of sheep-farming and the rapid establishment of a trade in salt provisions, the country was enabled to survive this crisis. Unfortunately there was more legislation of this type in store.

Amongst those Englishmen, who had most stoutly resisted the new policy of restriction was the ingenious, yet practical Petty, than whom probably no person was more versed in the details of Irish trade and agriculture. Under his direction, in connection with the Cromwellian transplanting, the country had been completely surveyed and mapped out, the results being embodied in the well-known Down Survey. The enormous mass of information which thus poured into his office must have acquainted him with almost every possible aspect of Irish life, and lends to his description of the economic conditions of Ireland a peculiar value. He may or may not have been always accurate, but he was usually in a position to know, and under no special temptation to falsify.

He estimates the entire population as 1,100,000, not a large increase, it will be noticed, on the conjectured number of inhabitants before the conquest. Of these 1,100,000 he reckons that 780,000 may be considered old enough to be capable of work. The tillage of 500,000 acres of corn employed about 100,000 workers; the working of wool and making up of cloth another 75,000, while 120,000 were engaged in the tending of cattle and sheep. The result of wars and confiscation is clearly displayed by his statement that the "British Protestants,"

whom he states to form three-elevenths of the total population, possessed "three-fourths of all the lands; five-sixths of all the housing; nine-tenths of all the housing in walled towns and places of strength; two-thirds of the foreign trade."⁵ Three-quarters of the native peasantry, on the other hand, lived in miserable mud-walled cabins, which possessed neither door, chimney, stairs or window, and were of such simple construction that they could be built in three or four days. Though living in a cattle-producing country, they seldom ate meat, unless an occasional hen or rabbit. The corn grown was probably for the benefit of the towns, for the rural population seems to have eaten little bread. Domestic poultry are beginning to be more prominent, as is evident from Petty's references to chickens and eggs in the dietary. Milk and its derivatives play the same part that they have done for centuries past.

But there is one striking innovation, the appearance of the potato as a staple food. This tuber had only been introduced into Ireland by Sir Walter Raleigh in 1585 and the travellers of the early half of the seventeenth century took no particular note of its adoption. In 1672, however, Petty speaks expressly of the native Irish as feeding "chiefly upon milk and potatoes," whereby, as he remarks with less than his usual acumen, "their spirits are not disposed for war." It is likely that the cultivation of the potato was an outcome of the wretchedly disturbed and unhappy condition of Ireland from 1641 to 1652. It has many advantages for such a period. It can be grown in almost any soil or situation, and produces a greater quantity of food from

⁵ Sir W. Petty's "Economic Writings" (ed. Hull), I., 156.

a given area than any other crop known. Its cultivation does not necessitate the employment of cumbrous and expensive implements; the spade suffices. It does not occupy the ground for long. Not more than four months need elapse between sowing and harvesting. Finally it keeps well, and may readily be concealed in underground pits, well calculated to escape the notice of foraging soldiery. In this way, it may be conjectured, the potato came to be utilized as the poor man's subsistence crop throughout the south and west of Ireland. The north still maintained its allegiance to oatmeal.

It may be doubted whether the economic results of the general adoption of the potato were beneficial. It fostered the growth of a great cottar population, farming insufficient holdings for a bare maintenance, living a self-centred life, buying little and selling little, just making ends meet in favourable years, starving when harvests were bad. Civilization implies differentiation of employments, exchange of one service for another, intellectual and economic activity. It cannot be denied that a system of life based on bread, which requires for its production such diverse employments as ploughing, sowing, reaping, threshing, milling, and baking, gives more scope to the human faculties than one based on the potato with its much shorter and simpler history. It may be advanced that the use of the potato kept the Irish peasantry poor and depressed throughout the eighteenth century and finally, by its failure on a colossal scale, caused more loss and suffering than have marked the trail of many a pestilence.

Throughout the earlier part of the eighteenth century tillage continued to decline and pasture to increase. As the salted-meat trade became more and more prosperous, farmers were tempted to produce for so ready and profitable a market, rather than to face the delays and hazards of corn-growing, with its possibilities of loss from bad harvests and foreign competition. The domestic policy of England in regard to agriculture after the Revolution exerted some influence over Irish conditions. One of the first acts of the new Government there was to pass the Corn Bounty Act of 1689, which encouraged the export of corn from England whenever prices there fell below a certain level. A liberal bounty was allowed on such export, amounting to as much as five shillings a quarter in the case of wheat. Thus the English farmer enjoyed that great desideratum of all agriculturists, a steady market. If there were a glut at home, the bounty enabled him to find a ready sale elsewhere, and he could sow freely without being harassed by the fear that his produce would be unsaleable, except at a ruinous price. On the other hand the bounty enabled English corn to undersell that of neighbouring countries in their own markets, and acted, in so far, as a discouragement to corn-growing in those countries. The Irish towns seem at this period to have obtained their bread corn in great measure from England. Not until 1784 when, under the influence of Foster, similar legislation was passed in the Irish Parliament, did Ireland begin to provide her own daily bread, and have an exportable surplus of wheat.

Other influences acted to the discouragement of tillage. The country was still unsettled; although there was no

great political convulsion, or Jacobite rising, such as occurred in Scotland, still there was a good deal of local disorder. Almost every county was troubled by outlaws known as Tories. These were usually either ex-soldiers from King James's army or members of families which had lost their lands in the confiscations. On both grounds they enjoyed the secret sympathy and support of the peasantry. The Tories felt a special animosity against the new landlords, and a feud marked by murder and pillage on one side and savage repression on the other raged all over Ireland. The proclamations of William III., Anne and George I. are full of rewards for the apprehension of Tories. A time of disturbance, as has already been pointed out, causes tillage to be superseded by pasture.

Furthermore the majority of the people were prevented from acquiring land for permanent possession. During the reigns of William and Anne a body of legislation known to history as the Penal Laws had been enacted, chiefly by the Irish Parliament, against persons professing the Roman Catholic religion. Its aim was, if possible, to effect the conversion of the Catholic to Protestantism, or alternatively, if this could not be achieved, to ensure that persons of that distrusted faith should not enjoy wealth, power or office. One of the provisions dealing with land debarred Catholics from purchasing land or taking a longer lease than thirty-one years.⁶ Except in the north the rural population, apart from the new landowning class, was almost exclusively Catholic. Thus, when any tenant, by dint of thrift and sagacity, began to lift himself above the level of his

⁶ 2 Anne, c. 6 (I.).

fellows, he could not purchase his holding or acquire a small farm. He was restricted to taking land on short lease and, having no certainty of permanent tenure, was naturally inclined to seek a quick return for his outlay, such as cattle-rearing would offer, rather than to sink money in working up the land to good condition for tillage, only perhaps to find himself faced with a demand for increased rent at the end of his term.

Religious considerations entered into the matter in another way. The produce of pasture land was not liable to tithe for the support of the Established Church, whereas it was rigidly exacted from all tilled lands, even, in some counties, from the poor man's potato patch. The Catholic grazier, therefore, besides engaging in a profitable trade, escaped paying the hated impost of a rival church. Furthermore, there was the important consideration in a country impoverished and depopulated by war, that ranching required little capital, could be conducted with a minimum of employed labour and did not involve much expenditure on buildings or implements. It has often been remarked that under the Irish system of land tenure, unlike that prevailing in England, the landlord merely grants the use of the soil to a tenant and does not concern himself with the state of the buildings or the provision of a proper equipment. It is not unlikely that this difference in custom takes its origin in this period, and may be explained by the reflection that in England tillage was in the minds of lessor and lessee and arrangements were made on that basis, whereas in Ireland grazing, which, as then practised, required hardly any accessories, was usually contemplated. The Irish custom was not felt as

a grievance until farming developed and was found to need better buildings and more complicated tools.

Altogether Ireland at this period presents a depressing picture. Poverty, religious intolerance, political and intellectual apathy, a lifeless Parliament meeting at long intervals, the country a huge cattle-run diversified only by the miserable villages of potato-growing cottars, the great landlords becoming absentees and leaving their estates to be managed by hirelings, who cared for neither the landlord's nor the tenants' interests, so long as they could maintain their own positions, agriculture no longer self-supporting, so that it was necessary to import corn, famine recurrent in case of bad harvest, as in 1727 and 1728, and again in 1741 and 1742. The poet Goldsmith, who had carried his talents from the mental stagnation of Ireland to the wider arena of London, was probably thinking of his native land when, picturing to himself a ruined and deserted village, he penned the famous lines:—

Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay.

Ireland was becoming a land of wealthy, careless, extravagant landlords, ruling autocratically over an indigent and struggling peasantry.

However signs began to appear of an awakening of public conscience regarding the state of rural Ireland. In 1731 the celebrated Dublin Society was formed, in its beginning an association of earnest men, by no means all possessed of practical experience, who met together to consider measures for the economic improvement of Ireland. It confined itself at first to making inquiries,

conducting experiments, and putting forward suggestions, which, in the form of essays, were prominently printed in the Dublin newspapers. Growing more confident with experience, it embarked on a policy of offering premiums for various forms of production. The earliest list of premiums proposed is of interest as showing what, in the opinion of the Society, were the greatest shortcomings of contemporary Ireland. Prizes were offered in 1740 for the best hops, flax-seed, flax, cider, earthenware, thread, malt liquor and lace.⁷ In the following year a more extended list appeared, including wheat, barley, turnips, manuring, planting of fruit and timber trees.⁸ In 1746 the then Lord Lieutenant, the famous Chesterfield, who thought highly of the Society's work, obtained for it an annual grant of £500 from Government. In 1766 its premium list dealt, *inter alia*, with bog and mountain reclamation, sowing of wheat, parsnips and turnips, saving of clover seed, production of rape seed on waste ground, growing of woad for dyeing, honey and wax, employment of children under thirteen years old, tanning, establishment of coast fisheries. Proceeding along such lines as these the Society has played, and still continues to play, a striking part in the improvement of agriculture. The State has more than once followed the path marked by the Society and been glad to take over its institutions.

The Irish Parliament, however, had not been unaffected by the same spirit. In 1727, alarmed at

⁷ Dr. H. F. Berry, "History of the Royal Dublin Society," p. 56.

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 58.

a famine, the sufferings of which were ascribed to the decline in corn-growing, it passed an Act for the compulsory tillage of five acres in every hundred under cultivation.⁹ The measure was only half-hearted, for the penalty for disobedience was no more than 40s., less than the price of a single bullock from the grazier's herd. The Act was evaded or defied, and soon became a dead letter. Although small export bounties on corn were from time to time allotted by Irish statutes, it was not until 1758 that the Parliament seriously set itself to promote tillage. The chief difficulty in dealing with the situation concerned transport and marketing. Roads were bad and, except for Dublin and, perhaps Cork, there were no large markets available near at hand. Under these circumstances bounties were given for corn raised in the interior of Ireland and brought to Dublin for sale. The scale of payment was liberal—6d. per ton per mile for wheat and barley, and 4d. per ton per mile for oats. For flour the premium was 1s. per ton per mile, so that in order to earn the higher bounty, country gentlemen were tempted to erect mills on their properties. Nine years later a small bounty was given on Irish corn carried coastwise to Dublin. The policy of these Acts was sharply criticised, as it was thought to be too expensive in proportion to the results attained. In 1777 bounty was paid on some 40,000 tons of wheat and 15,000 tons of flour, at a cost to the Irish Government of £50,000, about one-twentieth of the total annual revenue.

Probably a better expedient was that adopted by

⁹ 1 Geo. III., c. 10, (I.).

Foster in his celebrated Corn Laws of 1784.¹⁰ The details of this measure are complicated, but the policy underlying it may be briefly stated. The export of Irish corn was not permitted when its price had risen above a certain stipulated figure. This was a security against the depletion of the corn supply in the event of scarcity or bad harvest. On the other hand, when the price was low, corn might not only be exported, but its export was encouraged by bounties. *Per contra*, heavy duties were placed on the import of corn except at times when Irish prices were high. Thus the Irish grower was practically secured in his home market and was never faced with that bugbear of agriculture in recent times, a glut of cheap foreign produce, forcing down prices and reducing his profits to the vanishing point, perhaps, when the home harvest was poor, causing him to sell at a loss. On the other hand, he could produce freely without fear of over-stocking his market, for the bounty would assist him to export, if domestic prices were unremunerative.

This Act seems to have been astonishingly successful. In the absence of statistics of production, it is impossible to estimate the increase of Irish land under corn. The domestic consumption probably did not expand very notably, as the peasants, who were not bread-eaters and formed nine-tenths of the population, do not seem to have made any change in their dietary at this time. The increase, therefore, after fully supplying the home market, must be judged by the export figures, which show a steady increase. During the triennial period 1787—9 the average annual export was 520,000 barrels,

¹⁰ 23 & 24 Geo. III., c. 19 (I.).

or about 1,200,000 cwt. In the similar period 1797—9 the average annual export was 675,000 barrels, an increase of about two-sevenths.

There were, however, other factors at work in producing this large extension of tillage. England, which had formerly been an exporter of corn, and had indeed encouraged its cultivation by measures very similar to those of Foster, was now becoming an industrial country. The manufacturing towns were springing up, and the home supply of food was beginning to fall short of the demand. Thus the Irish corn-grower had a large and increasing market, almost at his doors. By 1787 Ireland had ceased to import corn from England, and a much larger flow of trade in the contrary direction had taken its place. It must also be remembered that the great French War, which began in 1793, filled the sea with privateers and cut off foreign competition in the English market, thus causing a rise in prices, which was all to the advantage of the Irish producer. Times of war, with their increased demand and diminished supply, always tend to the advantage of home industries, especially those which furnish necessary commodities. Luxury trades may be damaged by war conditions, but agriculture, which produces the one imperative necessity of life, food, never fails to prosper in time of war.

Arthur Young, who travelled in Ireland between 1776 and 1779, has left an interesting and very detailed account of the condition of Irish agriculture at that period. He found much to criticise, yet much to approve. There was a certain poverty of equipment everywhere, which prevented the attainment of the best results. Ploughs and harrows were often of primitive

construction. Farm carts consisted of no more than two wheels, an axle and a small platform of boards. Bullocks were used in place of horses. Corn was threshed on mud floors, so that Irish grain could often be recognized by the clay adhering to it. Insanitary cabins served the purpose of dairies. He was pleased to see the increase of tillage, which was just beginning to be noticeable at the time of his visit, and remarks that the increase of cultivation had not materially injured the grazier. However, he laments the general omission of turnips, which would provide food for bullocks during the winter, when the grass did not grow. The result of this lack of winter provender was that the cattle, half-starved as they were during half the year, could not pick up condition during the other half, and never attained the size or weight of beasts in other lands. The export figures of the produce of pasturage and pig-keeping at this time show clearly that tillage and grazing managed to co-exist very comfortably. In the seven-year period, 1771-1777, the average annual exports were as follows:—

- Beef, 195,000 barrels (a barrel = $2\frac{1}{2}$ cwt.)
- Pork, 55,000 barrels.
- Bacon, 19,125 flitches.
- Butter, 267,000 cwt.
- Hides, 121,000 cwt.
- Tallow, 41,000 cwt.
- Wool, 1,415 stone.
- Worsted yarn, 99,000 stone.

The figures for beef and pork alone represent the produce of about 90,000 oxen and 110,000 swine, and

those for wool and yarn that of some 700,000 sheep. Of the butter it is more difficult to judge, as milk yields vary greatly, but it may be conjectured that at least 200,000 cows were required to produce the large export mentioned.

The export figures of the products of pasturage continued to increase till the Union and even after it, despite the steady growth in the production and export of corn. The figures for butter, pork and bacon, in particular, show a large expansion. But, contemporary with the Union, there appears the beginning of a change in the meat trade, which shows a tendency to revert to the older form of a commerce in live animals. The tendency was most marked in the case of cattle, and least noticeable in the case of swine. The advent of the steamer in later years facilitated the growth of this trade, which is now easily the most important in Ireland. But it is well to remember that the country has also been a great corn-producer in the past, and is not irrevocably doomed by nature to raise nothing but animals and animal produce, such as butter and eggs.

Irish agriculture at the end of the eighteenth century was well rewarded in both its branches. Turning, however, to the condition of the people at large at this period, the picture is much less cheering. It does not seem that agricultural prosperity brought much happiness to the hearth of the actual tiller of the soil. The system was essentially unsound, resembling that disordered state of the human frame, in which, though nourishment is freely given, it cannot be assimilated, and the patient wastes and weakens accordingly. The great landlords became very rich. The latter part of

the eighteenth century was the heyday of the Irish aristocracy. They built themselves mansions in the capital and palaces in the country, lavishing fortunes on marble staircases, mahogany doors and decorated stucco ceilings. They were not oppressors in their own persons, as a general rule, but were often extravagant and indifferent. The Nemesis, that attends only too surely on such qualities, was destined to descend on them eventually in the shape of debt and difficulty, culminating in an Incumbered Estates Act.

Between them and the peasant intervened another class, the "middlemen," who took land in bulk from the great landlords and parcelled it out in detail to a multitude of small tenants, who cultivated on a system, which seems to be permeated by recollections of the servile tenure of the middle ages. The cottier, as he was called, rented a potato patch and enough grass land to graze one or two cows, paying for them, not in money, but in labour. The potatoes and milk thus obtained provided subsistence for the labourer and his family. As agricultural labour was only valued at about 6d. a day, it necessarily followed that all, or nearly all, of the cottier's work was expended in paying for his potato and grazing ground. Very little money passed between the parties. The cottier was tied to the soil almost as closely as the *Hibernicus* (cf. p. 12), for if he lost one holding and could not immediately rent another, he was faced with starvation. Not handling money, he could not buy or save. His house was miserable, his furniture and implements primitive. On the other hand, in an average season he possessed an adequate supply of food. Potatoes and milk, though to modern tastes an extremely

monotonous diet, are quite sufficient to maintain health and strength. But there was no reserve, either of food or money, to fall back on in time of stress. The cottier, in the familiar colloquial Irish phrase, "was never a halfpenny above a beggar"; in fact, in some places and at some seasons, begging was a necessary and indispensable part of the household economy. The cottier, however, was at this time well and warmly clad, for the wool which Ireland produced in such quantity was converted into cloth by an industry, which was still largely domestic, and hence clothes of a rough but durable kind were readily procurable. The rural poor were not ragged; the general testimony of travellers is that they were better dressed than their fellows in England or France. The famous Irish frieze, stiff, heavy and closely woven, was impervious to either cold or rain.

As the tenant was dependent on the landlord's goodwill for his very existence, his relations with the landlord were usually characterized by domineering autocracy on the one side and extreme servility on the other. Stories are told of gentlemen's servants whipping a whole train of carts into the gutter to allow their master's coach to pass unhindered, of a poor man's face being laid open with a whip stroke, because he stood inadvertently in a great man's way at a public assembly, of a landlord callously destroying a whole village because it marred the view from his hall door. It must not be supposed that all the gentry were of this type. The aristocracy of this period produced many humane and patriotic men, as is shown by the history of the Irish Parliament and the Dublin Society. Still the general tendency was towards a haughty carelessness and indifference.

The peasantry was not in reality so submissive as it appeared to be. It is characteristic of Ireland that oppression is not always steadily faced and opposed, but is often met by an apparent acquiescence, cloaking a furious inward resentment, which sooner or later finds terrible vent. Agrarian grievances gave rise to agrarian conspiracies. In 1761 the Whiteboy disturbances, fore-runners of many similar outbreaks under various names, began to trouble the South of Ireland. Some of the landlords had enclosed and treated as part of their own estates the ancient commons, which, from time immemorial, had been used for the benefit of all the inhabitants. The right to graze cattle by some river bank or hillside, to gather firing in a wood, to cut turf from a bog, was very valuable in the eyes of persons living the life of a cottier. Now these rights were in many places withdrawn. The people retaliated by assembling at night in large numbers and throwing down the fences newly erected around the commons. These parties were called Whiteboys from their practice of wearing white shirts over their clothes, probably to serve both as a partial disguise and a rough and ready kind of uniform, easily assumed and easily cast aside or concealed. In some districts, where enclosures had not been made, the animosity of the Whiteboys was directed against those connected with the levying of tithes, not so much the Protestant clergymen themselves, as the tithe-proctors, who were the actual collectors, or the tithe-farmers, who made a livelihood by trading in tithes, buying the clergyman's right at a fixed sum and recouping themselves by the profits of collection. Both these persons were odious to the peasantry, the first

because he came into actual physical contact and could be seen by every member of the household, as he bore away a proportion of the year's provision, the second because his position naturally tempted him to extortion, in order to make as much advantage as possible out of his bargain. A kind of nocturnal terrorism soon prevailed. There were few murders, but many instances of cruelty. The Whiteboys, emboldened by success, began to issue proclamations and indeed soon undertook, as Lecky says, "to regulate the whole relation between landlord and tenant, and to enforce a new system of law wholly different from the law of the land."¹¹ Their actions, however severely reprehended by the political historian, are of interest to the economist. Inflammation on the surface, according to medical writers, indicates a damaged condition of the tissues lying beneath. So also a popular outburst of this kind usually indicates the places where the existing economic order presses heavily on the poorer class. Besides the destruction of enclosures and the maltreatment of tithe-proctors, cases occur of the rescue of property seized for non-payment of rent, the digging up of grass land in order to force the landlord to let it for tillage, the killing or hamstringing of cattle, resistance to the export of corn or flour, compulsion of landlords to renew leases to former tenants at expiration of a term. Many of these doings have remarkable modern parallels.

There were similar disturbances in the north, the most celebrated being that provoked about 1771 by the Marquis of Donegall, who imposed exorbitant fines on his tenants at renewal of lease, and evicted them ruthlessly

¹¹ "Ireland in the Eighteenth Century" II., 22.

if they refused to pay. All improvements were thus confiscated, and the land was turned into pasture. The ejected tenants formed themselves into armed bands under the name of the Steelboys, and their operations soon convulsed Antrim and Down. The disorder was suppressed after the lapse of two years, but it left lasting effects. Lord Donegall's action was condemned by public opinion and thereafter there was in Ulster no challenge of the tenant's right to sell his interest and receive compensation for his improvements. Many of the Steelboys fled to America, men of the stubborn Presbyterian type, labouring under a sense of wrong. Their recent experiences naturally disposed them to take sides with the colonists in the struggle then pending with the home Government, and they played a prominent part both in the war and the constitution-building, which followed it.

In the north, however, outbreaks of this kind, though fierce, were not lasting. In the south Whiteboyism smouldered for many a year. The Irish Parliament, which was, to all intents and purposes, an assembly of landlords, passed severe Acts against the Whiteboys, and a process of repression set in with all the usual accompaniments on either side. Amid all the outward prosperity of agriculture during the Great French War, disturbing influences were gathering strength. The full force of these was not perceived until the lean years came after Waterloo with high prices and short commons, making the labourer's lot, always hard, well-nigh unendurable.

CHAPTER IV.

Commerce and Industry 1600—1800

When the long wars of Elizabeth cease, and forty years of peace ensue, it becomes possible to survey the economic state of Ireland from the commercial, as well as the agricultural point of view. Commerce, in this connection, must usually be interpreted as external trade. There has always been domestic production for the home market, but, while its presence must always be taken into account, its magnitude can only be conjectured. There is nothing, perhaps, of which it is so difficult to form a judgment, as production and trade taking place within political boundaries. Who can say, for instance, how many stone of Irish wool was annually spun into yarn and woven into cloth to make the frieze coats of the Irish peasantry, or how much butter the farmers' carts brought into the country towns? These were cases of internal production and consumption. There are no statistics even now of such matters as butter production and home consumption of meat. External trade, however, has usually to pass through Customs barriers, where its amount and value are noted. Its data are therefore immediately accessible, and deductions may much more easily be drawn. External trade, too, throws an interesting sidelight on internal trade, for it seldom takes place until a commodity is being produced on such a scale that it overstocks the home market and

overflows into neighbouring countries. At the present time the chief industries of Ireland produce largely, if not altogether, for export. Dublin stout, Belfast linen and ships, Cork butter, Limerick bacon, provide ample illustration of this fact. The home market is small and easily glutted, whereas the external has an almost unlimited capacity. Export, therefore, will always furnish an indication of the leading tendencies of home production.

In the sixteenth century the commodities chiefly exported were hides and skins, coarse linens and woolens, the chief import, as in mediæval times, being wine. The two exports first named have figured in Irish trade from the earliest recorded times, the two latter now for the first time begin to be prominent. Flax had been grown in the country from time immemorial, and linen shirts formed part of the costume of the ancient Irish. In Spenser's day these shirts were extremely voluminous, often containing thirty or forty yards of material. Probably they were pleated or gathered in the same manner as the Highlander's kilt, and for the same reason, to maintain the warmth of the wearer and protect him from rain. The women, at the same period, wore elaborate linen head-dresses somewhat resembling the turban of the East. It is evident that linen was plentifully produced and naturally an export trade followed. English statutes of 1542 and 1571 make reference to this trade, and Guicciardini includes manufactured linen among the commodities exported from Ireland to Antwerp.¹

¹ Dr. Alice Murray, "Commercial Relations between England and Ireland," p. 112.

The woollen manufacture has had an equally long history. Wool was universally used for outer garments, and there must have been a large domestic production of cloth. Sheep had always been very numerous, particularly in the more hilly and rocky districts. During the Tudor period the exportation of raw wool was prohibited, with the result that the surplus production could not be profitably disposed of unless it received some degree of manufacture. Under these circumstances yarn, which is, so to speak, wool that has gone through the first stage of manufacture, was exported in large quantity, also frieze. A woollen industry was in process of development. By the reign of James I. Waterford had established a reputation for rugs or coverlets, which combined warmth with a delightful softness and lightness. The woollen manufacture received no encouragement from the authorities, who hesitated to raise up a possible competitor to that well-established and much-prized clothing trade, which was the industrial mainstay of England. In after days, indeed, the policy hardened into a deliberate effort to check and prevent any possible expansion of Irish manufacture in this direction.

No such jealousy was felt towards the linen manufacture, which was allowed to go its own course and, as time went on, even became the recipient of favours from the State. Strafford, in pursuit of his plan of making Ireland a strong basis and support for the royal power, casting about for means whereby he could enrich Ireland without damaging King Charles' English revenues, recognized the possibilities of the linen industry. He set to work with his accustomed thoroughness and insight,

importing £100 worth of flax-seed from Holland and sending to the Low Countries for skilled workmen to instruct the Irish in the finer processes of manufacture. After the Restoration the great Duke of Ormond, who was Lord Lieutenant for so many years under Charles II., continued Strafford's policy in this respect, and the Irish Parliament in 1672 voted money for the encouragement of the linen industry.² However it was as yet far from being firmly established, and in the meanwhile a deadly blow had been dealt at its sister industry.

By the middle of the seventeenth century Irish wool was a welcome import in England, as it was a raw material for the textile manufacture, which was now so advanced as to require more wool than native growers could supply. But the English clothiers did not wish any of their Continental rivals to have the benefit of raw material grown within the King's dominions, and had secured the passing of a law forbidding the export of home-grown wool, English or Irish, to any foreign country. One outcome of this enactment was a great prevalence of wool smuggling to foreign countries from the Irish creeks and coves. This illicit trade was carried on with the warm support of the people at large and often with the connivance of the local authorities. The law was considered to be flagrantly unjust, and those who tried to enforce it encountered the dead weight of general disapproval at every turn.

A further and more important result was that Irish wool, having only a limited market, outside its country of production, was retained at home and converted into

² *ibid.*, p. 115.

cloth by an industry, which was, in most of its processes, domestic. The spinning-wheel was a feature of every cottage. Carding and teasing were familiar operations. Dyes were obtained from plants. Even weaving, though it soon came to be concentrated in Dublin and other towns, was to a considerable extent a rural industry.

A picture of the state of Irish external commerce at this stage is given in Petty's "Treatise of Ireland," where the exports for 1685 are given in detail.³ The most prominent items are:—

- Beef, 75,231 barrels.
- Butter, 134,712 barrels.
- Corn, 148,115 barrels.
- Lamb-skins, 143,500.
- Rabbit-skins, 166,500.
- Hides (salted), 93,412.
- Hides (tanned), 86,093.
- Wool (exported to England only), 123,703 stone.
- Frieze, 629,141 yards.
- Woollen cloth ("New Drapery"), 4,937 pieces.
- Linen cloth, 1,851 pieces.
- Linen yarn, 3,825 cwt.

The raw wool exported represents the produce of about 860,000 sheep. The "new drapery" of the returns comprises serges and similar materials, as opposed to "old drapery," or broadcloth.

In Petty's list appear also the small beginnings of exports, which have since become more valuable, for instance, beer (4,644 barrels), whiskey (or "aqua

³ Petty, "Economic Writings" (ed. Hull), II., 594.

vitae") 1519 gallons. The imports, as a result of the Cattle Acts, which had throttled cross-channel trade, are mostly from the colonies or foreign countries. Among them appear 18,241 pieces of calico from India, 15,000 cwt. of sugar, probably from the West Indies, 3,000,000 lbs. of tobacco from America, 2,056 tuns of wine from France, and 727 pipes of wine from Spain. These statistics make it evident that, as England would not receive Ireland's main product, Ireland had formed other commercial relationships.

Unfortunately there were to be other manifestations of the insensate and short-sighted policy of commercial restriction. In the export returns given above there is a small export of woollen cloth of the kind known as "new drapery," and a large export of frieze. These are both manufactured woollens. The Irish, finding a surplus of wool left on their hands, which they could not export to foreign countries and which could not be absorbed by the English market, had taken to working up their wool and sending it out in the form of a fabric. A prosperous weaving industry was springing up, favoured by the abundance of cheap raw material. Many of the French Huguenots, driven from their native country by the persecutions of Louis XIV., had settled in Ireland. Among these refugees were many skilled weavers, and the effect of their business experience and technical knowledge was felt both in the woollen and linen industries, while a third small industry, which still exists in Dublin, the poplin manufacture, was founded by these valuable immigrants. The woollen industry became specially centred in the southern suburb of Dublin, the quarter known as "The

Liberties," which still retains its Weavers' Hall and Weaver Square.

In 1697 William III. invited Louis Crommelin, a Huguenot refugee, to come to Ireland to develop the linen manufacture. Crommelin came over in the following year and fixed his works at Lisburn. Encouraged and assisted by Government grants, he imported a thousand looms and spinning-wheels from Holland, watched carefully over the cultivation of the flax and the proper bleaching and finishing of the linen, and gave money premiums to weavers.⁴ Soon the North of Ireland, till then the most backward part of the country from the economic point of view, was producing finer linen than had ever been made in the British Isles. At first the industry was not confined to Ulster, but, as time went on, that province, owing mainly, it would seem, to the impetus administered by Crommelin, came to engross the manufacture.

The woollen industry was less fortunate in that it had to encounter the watchful jealousy of the English clothiers. The same year, which saw the arrival of Crommelin at Lisburn witnessed the passing of an Act by the subservient Irish Parliament imposing a ruinous export duty on Irish woollen goods.⁵ As if this were not enough, it was followed in the succeeding year by an English Act positively forbidding the export of Irish woollen manufactured goods to foreign countries.⁶ These statutes remained in force for many years and had a profound influence on Irish economic development. Ireland had thus only one external market, namely,

⁴ Dr. Alice Murray, *op. cit.*, pp. 116, 117.

⁵ 10 Wm. III., c. 5 (I.).

⁶ 10 Wm. III., c. 16 (E.).

England, for her raw wool, and no external market whatever for any woollen manufactured goods. The outward smuggling trade in wool increased, even the Customs officials conniving at the traffic. Barrels were shipped to France or Holland packed tightly with wool, a little butter or beef being placed at the top for the purpose of deception. Ships put into quiet coves and took in cargoes, whose nature was revealed by the flecks of wool that dotted the hedges for weeks afterwards. Irish weavers, finding themselves unable to earn a living at home, betook themselves to foreign countries, where they helped to raise up a competition, which was severely felt by the English clothiers. Again the classes most hurt and alienated by these laws were the country gentry and the urban artisans, both at this time mainly Protestant in religion and extremely loyal to the Crown and the English connection. William III., in his speech from the throne at Westminster, conscious of the injustice being done to Ireland, yet unwilling to offend the clothing interest, even in the cause of equity as between his two realms, salved his conscience by promising to Ireland encouragement for her linen industry in lieu of the woollen manufacture, which he and his Parliament were about to cripple.

The promise was kept in the main, but the bargain was by no means fair as between the parties. A possible trade, as Miss Murray aptly remarks, was substituted for an existing and flourishing one.⁷ Many years elapsed before the linen industry developed sufficiently to make amends for the damage suffered by the woollen. Weaving did not, of course, die out altogether, but it

⁷ *op. cit.*, p. 115.

could only produce for the home market, and the industry, deprived of any possible expansion, was always in difficulties. The Dublin weavers were a turbulent and discontented class. They were especially jealous of those who wore imported clothes and even carried their resentment so far as to strip in the street those offending in this way, and tear and destroy their clothes before their eyes.⁸

A further illustration of this policy of economic interference is to be found in the administration of the English Navigation Acts. As is well known, this legislation was originally aimed at the Dutch carrying trade, and was intended to prevent traffic being carried on between foreign countries and the English dominions except by English ships or ships of the particular country with which the trade was being conducted. Thus, for example, trade with France must be conducted by either English or French ships, that with Spain by English or Spanish, and so on. However, by a very strained and inequitable interpretation, these laws were considered to prohibit direct trade between Ireland and the colonies except by way of England. Thus, for instance, a ship from Jamaica or Virginia with cargo for Ireland was obliged to sail past her real destination and land her goods for transhipment to the Irish ports, a most circuitous and expensive proceeding. The exchange of goods with the colonies, which might have been glad to barter their sugar or tobacco for Irish butter, beef or frieze, to the mutual advantage of both parties, was made difficult and unprofitable. Furthermore Irish shipping lost a possible field of employment.

⁸ D. A. Chart, "Story of Dublin," p. 279.

This period makes very melancholy reading, only alleviated somewhat by a consideration of the circumstances, and the dominant ideas of the time. The authors of this legislation hardly considered that they were stifling the hopes of an infant industry. Rather they saw themselves as wise planners and contrivers, aiming at the general good, even at the expense of local suffering. Ireland was considered as a colony, England the mother country. The burdens of England, naval and military, financial and diplomatic, were very great. She had to be, as it were, the shield of the whole Empire, and if she were seriously weakened, all would be imperilled. The woollen industry had for centuries been the staple of England. The mercantile marine, the nursery and reserve of the navy, was an extremely important factor in the defensive system. These two occupations, therefore, must be jealously guarded and preserved from competition, even within the Empire. The statesmen of that time, believing as they did, in the effectiveness of State action in fostering and guiding economic development, saw no great wrong in repressing any tendency of Ireland towards industries, in which she would compete with England, and directing her rather to those, in which she would be an useful ally.

Thus in 1711 a Government department known as the Linen Board was set up for the special purpose of watching over the welfare of that industry. It administered grants ranging from £10,000 to £30,000 annually. The methods adopted by this body were much the same as those of the Dublin Society already mentioned, and, like the Society, it was very much under the influence of the

earnest amateur. The peerage and the higher gentry were most prominent on the Linen Board, the Protestant clergy in the ranks of the Dublin Society. Certainly both organizations worked very zealously and were rewarded by seeing a process of rapid improvement. In 1710 the export of Irish linen cloth was 1,688,574 yards, valued at £105,537. By 1724 that export was doubled, by 1735 it was quadrupled. In 1726 a large Linen Hall was erected in Dublin to serve as a warehouse for goods awaiting export and place of sale for merchants. In 1766 the export amounted to more than ten times the figure of 1710, and the value of the product sent overseas exceeded a million pounds.

However, the successful development of this single industry did not reconcile the great mass of Irishmen to the galling restrictions under which they laboured. The prosperity caused by the linen manufacture was mainly confined to Ulster; the capital and the other provinces did not feel that its growth was any compensation for the difficulties of their own position. The American War brought matters to a crisis. The country was denuded of regular troops and, in order to prevent raids by hostile privateers, a Volunteer force 40,000 strong, composed chiefly of the substantial Protestant trading and farming class and officered by the gentry, had been established. The economic grievances of Ireland had been aggravated by the war, which immediately closed its best colonial market and was destined ere long to extend to important Continental customers, such as France and Spain. The provision trade, the mainstay of Southern Ireland, was still further hampered and annoyed by the numerous embargoes laid on the

export of food. It was a common practice of Governments in time of war or threatened war to prohibit all movements of shipping, or to forbid the export of provisions to certain countries, or perhaps to permit export only with licence or under convoy. Sometimes the embargo was complete, and no export whatsoever was permitted. This was done that the enemy might not lay in a stock of food and be enabled to prolong the war. The losses, delays and uncertainties that resulted were ruinous to trade. The Irish packers and shippers might perhaps have borne such trials, which are perhaps inevitable in time of war, with more patience, had they not the memory of many years of unjust restriction to spur them to energetic protest.

The statesmen of the country, led by Grattan, demanded the independence of their parliament, and the removal of all restrictions on the economic freedom of Ireland. The Volunteers were united and enthusiastic in support. At their reviews in Dublin the cannon were encircled with the menacing motto "Free Trade—or This." "Non-importation Leagues," whose members were pledged not to purchase or use the products of Great Britain unless the restrictions were removed, sprang up everywhere. English merchants found their trade with Ireland adversely affected. The capital was in a ferment. A riot broke out in the Liberties headed by the weavers, and a crowd attacked the Attorney-General's house, and compelled Members of Parliament, who fell into its hands, to swear that they would vote "for the good of Ireland, free trade, and a short Money Bill." The Commons, as the last item of this oath indicates, were threatening to refuse to vote any sums

towards the cost of the war, merely allotting what was necessary for the ordinary expense of government. The British authorities were in no position to resist a demand so strongly and unitedly made. In the midst of a disastrous colonial war, and faced by a powerful European coalition, they could not view without alarm the prospect of another armed struggle at their doors. Even Lord North, whose obstinacy and short-sightedness had largely contributed to bring about the revolt of the American colonies, hesitated to provoke another civil war nearer home. In 1779, acting on the advice of his Lord Lieutenant, he yielded to the storm.

The Acts which prohibited the export of Irish woollen and glass manufactures were repealed. This action removed the chief grievances of the Irish producer, for the English restraint on the import of Irish cattle had been abolished in 1759, and within the following ten years, Irish beef, butter and bacon, had been freely admitted. In 1779, too, the great and rising trade of the colonies was thrown open to Ireland as fully as to Great Britain, the sole condition being that Irish import and export duties affecting such trade should be maintained at the same level as those of Great Britain. The Acts against carrying gold and silver coin into Ireland were repealed. The rising brewing industry was permitted to import foreign hops and to receive a refund on the duty on British hops. Irish merchants were allowed to become members of the Turkey Company and to trade directly with the Levant. Thus the whole fabric of commercial restriction, which had been in force for over a century was swept away. An excellent reform had been brought about. But the manner of its achieve-

ment boded but little good for either country. Great Britain, deaf to entreaties or arguments based on justice, had yielded to the threat of force. Ireland had extorted a concession by an act of defiance and hostility in the midst of a dangerous crisis. Procedure of this kind leaves an unpleasant heritage in the minds of both parties, and the vexed question of Anglo-Irish relations can hardly be satisfactorily solved by such methods.

Indeed a mutual resentment and suspicion was soon to wreck a promising opportunity of welding the countries together in friendship. The legislation of 1779 had given Ireland freedom as regards her trade with foreign countries and the colonies, but, as between England and Ireland, commercial intercourse was impeded by a mass of Customs legislation which had grown up on either side of the Channel. Pitt was anxious to sweep this away and to establish between the countries a free trade, in the modern sense, as distinct from the freedom of exportation, which the Volunteers understood by the term. He may have meant this measure to lead to a political union, such, for instance, as was afterwards procured by a similar policy in the scattered kingdoms and principalities of the German Empire. The presence of some such thought in his mind is evinced by his anxiety that Ireland, on admission to commercial equality with Great Britain, should accept a share of burdens as well as benefits, and should bind herself to contribute to the support of the Navy. His proposals were transmitted in 1785 to the Irish Parliament in the shape of ten propositions. Duties, where existent, were to be equalized, the country in which the duty was higher always making the

necessary reduction. Export bounties, except on food-stuffs, were to be abolished, as were all prohibitions in force in either country affecting the sale or export of the products of the other. Finally the tenth proposition stipulated that when the King's hereditary revenue should exceed a certain sum, the surplus should be applied to support the Navy in such manner as the Irish Parliament should direct.⁹

This offer, which seemed to Pitt extremely fair, was very doubtfully received in Ireland. Though Englishmen pointed out the benefits of a free entry to the profitable markets of Great Britain, Irishmen were rather inclined to consider the danger to their manufactures of open competition with powerful and long-established industries, supported by ample capital and possessed of valuable resources in the skill and experience of the workmen. The contribution to the Navy was resented as a species of tribute, inconsistent with the legislative independence of Ireland so proudly established in 1782. However, the propositions were accepted without material change, excepting that it was stipulated that the naval contribution should not be paid except in years when the general revenue balanced the expenditure of the kingdom. The propositions, as amended, were then returned to England, where they roused an immediate storm on their introduction into Parliament. At the instigation of the manufacturing interest amendments were inserted, which were almost certain to prejudice the chance of an agreement with Ireland. The provision as to general freedom of trade was left untouched, but at the same time it was stipulated that the

⁹ Dr. Alice Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 242.

Irish Parliament should enact all British laws which had been or might be made respecting navigation and foreign trade. Irish legislative freedom was similarly fettered as regards trade with foreign colonies, and, to some extent, with the United States. So long as a chartered company dealing with the East Indies through the port of London should be in existence, Ireland was not to deal with the East except through Great Britain. The naval contribution was no longer to depend upon the presence of a disposable surplus.

Pitt seems to have been really anxious for a settlement, but in the event it proved that the concessions, which he had made to the manufacturing interest, were destined to prove fatal to the project. Opinion in Ireland, eloquently expressed by Grattan, was vehemently opposed to mortgaging so soon the new legislative freedom. The clause dealing with Eastern trade shut out the greater part of a hemisphere. Lecky holds that it would probably have been on the whole to the advantage of Ireland to have accepted the offer, even in the amended form, but under the circumstances such a course was out of the question.¹⁰ The conclusion seems inevitable that the amendments insisted on by the English manufacturers were intended to wreck the whole scheme. Their defence of their conduct in saddling the concession of free trade with these limitations, none perhaps of great importance, but certain to prove disproportionately annoying, was that they feared the competition of Irish cheap labour, and that they would be undersold both at home and abroad if absolutely unfettered free trade were permitted. Pitt's

"Ireland in the Eighteenth Century," II., p. 448.

hopes for a Union henceforth travelled along a different path.

After the establishment of legislative independence and the withdrawal of the Commercial Propositions, Ireland was practically left free to work out her own economic salvation. It is true that, having failed to negotiate fiscal reciprocity with Great Britain, she was still faced with a considerable tariff barrier at British ports. On the other hand she could, if she chose, erect an equally formidable barrier against English products on her own side of the water. This policy, however, though often eagerly demanded by Irish manufacturers, was rarely put in force, either from unwillingness to provoke a tariff war, which generally proves more injurious to the weaker party, or from a desire to avoid adopting a position of hostility to Great Britain. A better spirit was beginning to be manifest in English commercial circles, and it was recognized that, generally speaking, the two countries might be considered to be complementary, not competitive, and that, even in cases where competition did arise, the English position was so well-established that she need not fear Ireland, nor grudge her whatever footing she could make for herself. Political and religious animosity, the offspring of the Cromwellian and Jacobite Wars, had been almost as instrumental as commercial jealousy in producing such measures as those of 1666 and 1698. Now these feelings had died away, and even commercial rivalry was beginning to lose its keenness.

A significant token of progress in this direction is the amicable settlement of the question regarding Irish direct trade with the East Indies. The insistence in the

later form of the Commercial Propositions on the maintenance of the exclusive privilege of the East India Company had aroused great resentment in Ireland. It was pointed out that the East Indiamen on their way out and home passed close to Irish ports, and that Irish traders would be put to needless expense if their wares had to be shipped by a long land and sea journey to London instead of going direct to Cork or Waterford, and thence to the East. In 1793 a Bill was passed in the Irish House of Parliament recognizing the chartered rights of the East India Company on condition that the company should treat British and Irish trade on equal terms and should send a ship annually to Cork to load a cargo of such Irish produce as should be offered for export to the East.¹¹ This does not seem a very great concession but apparently it was sufficient to satisfy both parties.

The economic activity of the independent parliament is well worth study, both in its domestic and its external relations. The export trade soon felt the benefit of the removal of the commercial restrictions. It was confidently expected that the woollen manufacture would resume the career of progress checked by the prohibition of export eighty years before. The export figures increased rapidly from 286,859 yards of "new drapery" in 1781 to 770,031 yards in 1785, but then began a steady decline, probably accentuated by the outbreak of the Great French War in 1793. For the period 1795—7 the average export was only about 143,000 yards, and by 1800 less than a quarter of that figure. It is evident that at the time of the Union the woollen industry was

¹¹ 33 Geo. III., c. 31 (I.).

only producing for the home market and could send no surplus abroad. Various reasons have been assigned for this failure, the most probable perhaps being that the lapse of time had permitted other countries to develop their woollen industries, while that of Ireland was compelled by the restrictions to remain stationary. It is also stated that, as neither wool nor woollen manufactures had access to open foreign markets, and as mutton, being unsuitable for salting, could not be exported to distant destinations, sheep became an unprofitable form of stock and were no longer reared in such large numbers, nor was any particular pains taken to maintain the breeds which produced the best type of wool. The Irish manufacture was mainly confined to flannels, friezes and less finished types of cloth. The English, on the other hand, specialized in broadcloths and the finer weaves. Besides their advantage in capital, skill and experience, they were at this time just beginning to adopt power production. The industrial revolution, which led to the factory system, began much earlier in England than in Ireland. The Irish market was invaded by cheap English woollens, for the most part of the finer description. After 1785 Ireland begins to import more woollens of all classes than she sends out, and by the end of the century her exports are negligible, and her average imports reach the large figure of 2,000,000 yards. It was the death-knell of the Dublin weaver. The Parliament and the Dublin Society alike had tried to rescue the decaying trade, making use of the methods, which had proved efficacious with the kindred linen manufacture. The Society established and maintained a woollen warehouse in Dublin, some-

what on the model of the Linen Hall. But it was of no avail. Ireland could not compete with rivals, who had been progressing during the eighty years in which she had been halted by the wayside.

Another textile industry, that connected with cotton, enjoyed considerable prosperity and at one time bade fair to become a rival to Lancashire. In 1780 Robert Brooke established a factory on a site in County Kildare, which he prophetically named "Prosperous." Other works of the same kind were set up in the Belfast Poor-house, at Slane, Kilmacthomas and elsewhere. The Parliament gave a bounty of $8\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. on export, and the Linen Board gave financial assistance to manufacturers. Brooke's establishment is said to have given employment to 7,000 persons, a figure which seems exaggerated, as it would imply that the population of Prosperous comprised about 20,000 persons. Nothing in contemporary history suggests that there was such a concentration in or even around the Kildare village. However the industry, despite its dependence on imported raw material and the sharp competition from Manchester, took firm hold and completely supplied the home market. In its anxiety to help, the Parliament had departed from its usual rule of not imposing tariffs against the British manufacturer, and had not only given an export bounty, as already mentioned, but had imposed duties amounting to from 35 to 50 per cent. *ad valorem* on the import of cotton manufactured goods, British as well as foreign. In 1800 the cotton industry ranked next to the linen in value, and was considered of sufficient importance to be the subject of a special clause in the Act of Union.

Linen, however, was easily the dominant feature in industrial Ireland. It was not only firmly established, but was developing rapidly. During the three years 1782—4, the average export of plain linen was over 21,000,000 yards. For the similar period 1794—6, just before political trouble began to exert its disturbing influence, the average export was 46,000,000 yards. The trade was largely devoted to and dependent on external markets, despatching its goods not only to Great Britain, but also to the British colonies and the United States.

The brewing industry was specially fostered by the Parliament, for what would now be called “temperance” reasons, as providing an alternative beverage to take the place of the cheap and fiery whiskey, which was blamed for most of the turbulence and “faction fighting” of rural Ireland. Grattan once told the Dublin brewers that it was at their source “that the Parliament would find in its own country a means of health with all its flourishing consequences, and a cure of intoxication with all its misery.” It seems paradoxical now, but of course, at that time, tea and coffee were still the luxuries of the rich, and certainly beer was preferable to whiskey. Brewing was encouraged by a reduction in the excise on beer, coupled with an increase in the excise on home-made spirits, and in the customs duty on such as came from abroad. The conditions under which beer was manufactured changed gradually, large establishments taking the place of the small breweries, some of which were no more than a mere extension of home-brewing. Some of the firms, whose names are well-known in this connection, took

their rise at this period, notable instances being Messrs. Beamish and Crawford, of Cork, and Guinness, of Dublin. The latter firm was brewing in Leixlip as early as 1756, and in 1759 Arthur Guinness took a lease from Mark Rainsford of "a dwelling-house, brew-house, two malthouses and stables" in James's Street, Dublin, the nucleus of the present large establishment on the same site. The production of Irish brewers as yet, however, was almost entirely for the home market, and there was little exportation.

Distilling, too, despite its less favourable treatment, continued to progress, and, like brewing, was changing from semi-domestic to what may be called factory methods. The smaller distilleries were disappearing, and their place was being taken by the larger, which steadily increased their output. Between 1780 and 1798 the produce of the distilleries rose from 1,227,651 gallons to 4,783,954 gallons, an increase almost fourfold. Besides this regular industry illicit distilling flourished in many parts of the country, despite the efforts of an army of excisemen to suppress a practice so harmful to the revenue. The excise on whiskey was much lower in Ireland than in Great Britain, and it was stated that a man could drink himself into complete insensibility for the expenditure of a few pence. Certainly, if it were not so, most of the peasantry could never have enjoyed that dubious pleasure, for their manner of existence was such that they can seldom have handled any larger sum.

The Parliament also turned its attention to the provision of fuel, particularly coal, from domestic sources. Here the chief difficulty was that of transport. Dublin was the chief coal-burning centre of Ireland, but was

accustomed to rely mainly on seaborne supplies. Even so early as 1667 a regular trade was being carried on in this commodity, Whitehaven and Liverpool sending shiploads of forty or fifty tons daily.¹² Coal, being a heavy load, was specially suitable for water transport. The chief Irish colliery district was situated around Castlecomer, in the north of County Kilkenny, at a distance from Dublin of sixty miles, that is to say, three or four expensive days' journey by waggon, as compared with the cheaper cross-channel voyage, which in favourable weather might be performed in one or two days. Obviously, therefore, Castlecomer could not compete with Whitehaven in the Dublin market. In order to cope with difficulties of inland transit, such as this, the Parliament adopted a policy of canal development, the first line sanctioned being that of the Grand Canal from Dublin across the midlands to the Shannon near Banagher.¹³ Its construction was commenced in 1755, but it was not completed till much later. By this means bulky loads such as corn or turf were brought cheaply, though not expeditiously, to the metropolis. In 1789 another waterway called the Royal Canal was commenced. It ran from Dublin to the Upper Shannon above Athlone, and, unlike the Grand Canal, was never a financial success. Rivers, like the Barrow, were also canalised, and it was thought that Ireland, being flat over much of its surface and possessing many fine rivers, would lend itself so well to canal construction that the country would in a short time be another Holland. However, the transformation proceeded very

¹² Import and Export Book, 1667 (Public Record Office of Ireland).

¹³ Dr. G. O'Brien, "Economic History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century," p. 365.

slowly, and the railway age supervened while many necessary links in the canal system were still unmade. The effect of the canals was therefore very limited and may be taken to extend only to Leinster and the eastern part of Ulster. Munster and Connaught were not materially affected by the canal system, and goods traffic between these provinces and the capital had either to go a circuitous journey by sea, or suffer all the delays and expense of cartage over a distance of 100 to 150 miles. This point has an important bearing subsequently in connection with the efforts to relieve the great famine of 1847.

As far as regards the supply of Irish fuel to Dublin the canals were only a success in that they carried the turf of the central bogs to Dublin. No canal or canalised river tapped the Irish coalfields. Even when the railways came, the nearest railway station was eight miles off, and the cost of cartage was so heavy that the coal had only a local sale. It should be remembered in this connection that the English coal from Whitehaven and Wigan is bright and quick-burning, whereas that from Kilkenny, though it gives a good heat, is a slow-burning and somewhat dull anthracite, so that the native product is handicapped in many ways.

Fisheries were also developed by means of a system of bounties and inspection. The defect of Irish fisheries has always lain in lack of capital and consequent poverty of equipment. Small vessels are used which dare not venture far to sea, and so the fishery tends to resolve itself into a mere nightly cruise and morning return to harbour. Boats of this type cannot keep the sea, following the herring or mackerel wherever they go. They

are tied to their port, and are dependent on the restricted market of that port. Hence Ireland had been confined to inshore fisheries and possessed few deep sea fishermen. Only at such places as Howth and Kinsale, where the large adjacent cities of Dublin and Cork provided a ready market, did the fishing industry prosper. On the west coast, three days' journey from the nearest market, it was of little avail to catch fish, except for local consumption. Now, however, under the stimulus of bounties, a better type of vessel was introduced, an export trade in salt fish sprang up, and Irish fishermen took to going further afield, the most remarkable instance being the enterprise of Waterford and Wexford fishermen in sailing annually to the inhospitable Newfoundland coast.

It may be noticed, too, that the glass industry expanded and established a high reputation. It had been the object of a direct prohibition of export, which had been removed by the concessions of 1779. In 1782 a factory was established at Waterford by the Penroses, who imported skilled workmen from Stourbridge. The ware produced at Waterford soon began to show that quality of artistic merit, which has attracted the attention of the connoisseur, and has placed "Waterford glass" in the same category as Dresden china and old Sheraton furniture.

Summing up this period between the removal of the commercial restrictions and the Union, it may be said that Ireland made considerable economic progress, but not sufficient, however, to enable her to withstand that competition on equal terms which was bound sooner or later to follow the enactment of the Union. An agricul-

tural country, just beginning to be industrial, was joined to a country, which was so successful in industry that it was ceasing to be agricultural. Irish industries had a hard fight to face, and twenty years of fostering had apparently not developed a sufficiently hardy constitution to enable them to face the ordeal before them. In fact, it may be doubted whether such a policy as has been described is really wise in the end. The bounty-fed or protected industry tends to become dependent on State assistance, to lack stamina, to be, in short, a perpetual pensioner, whose trading losses have to be made good by the general public. Such help may be necessary at the initiation of an industry, but it should always be stipulated that State aid will cease after a definite period, by which time the enterprise, if it is destined to succeed at all, should begin to be self-supporting.

On the other hand, it may be maintained that the short period of encouragement had been inadequate to atone for the long epoch of limitation and restraint, that the Irish manufacturer had not been able to acquire reserve funds, or to build up a secure position in which he might withstand competition. It must also be remembered that of the twenty-one years, which elapsed between 1779 and 1800, only ten were years of peace. War, which stimulates agriculture by making it more profitable than before, hampers manufacture by closing its external markets and, in many cases, hindering the supply of raw material. If the war with France had not broken out in 1793, and the Union had been postponed for another twenty years, it is possible that other industries might have taken as vigorous a root as the linen manufacture, which, though for many years

a fosterling of the State, can now look back on ninety years of sturdy independent growth. It was not unnatural that Irish manufacturers in 1800 dreaded the idea of a Union, with its inevitable consequence, sooner or later, of fiscal equality and unchecked competition with Great Britain.

In order to meet these fears to some extent, commercial concessions were introduced into the Act. Although, generally speaking, freedom of trade was established, and all prohibitions and bounties in either country were to cease automatically, certain articles were still to be subject to a small protective duty on import into Ireland, in most cases 10 per cent. *ad valorem*. Of the commodities thus favoured the most important were wearing apparel, cotton and silk goods, hardware, pottery and saddlery. It is evident that this clause was inserted to protect some of the Irish industries which had been making such progress in recent years, particularly perhaps the promising cotton manufacture. Though other export bounties were swept away, the Irish bounty on corn was allowed to stand, in view of the importance of preserving the food supply, particularly in time of war. Trade with foreign countries or the colonies was to be open to both countries on the same terms, thus removing the last vestige of the grievances connected with the Navigation Acts.

The Union deprived the Irish manufacturer of the shield which had protected him against his nearest and keenest rival, the English producer. If the commodity which he made were not on the specially exempted list, he felt immediately the full stress of competition. Even if it were, he was only protected by a duty of not more

than 10 per cent., which was not very effective in counterbalancing the advantages of his rival. It must be remembered, too, that, even in the exempted commodities, 10 per cent. was a great reduction from the existing protective duty. Miss Murray instances the case of silk stockings, the duty on which was reduced by the Union from 4s. 8d. per pair to 1s. or 1s. 6d., thus forcing the Irish stocking-maker to alter his prices proportionately or be undersold. Thus he must either cheapen production, or be content with a smaller profit. There were similar experiences in other industries. The Union, which favoured the landed interest, confronted the manufacturers with a situation full of trials and difficulties, with which many were unable to cope.

CHAPTER V.

The Land and its Produce since 1800

The passing of the Union produced in the course of time a marked effect on the development of Irish agriculture. The complete removal of Customs barriers between the two countries fostered the exchange of commodities and stimulated Irish export, particularly of those products, mainly agricultural in their nature, of which Great Britain stood in need. The increase of tillage continued, and the export of corn rose steadily. During the three-year period 1803—1805 the average annual export was 140,000 barrels of wheat and 439,000 barrels of other kinds of corn (probably oats for the most part). During a similar period, 1818—1820, the average annual export was 158,000 barrels of wheat and 1,387,000 barrels of other kinds of corn. In 1821 no wheat was exported, probably on account of a bad harvest and consequent distress, though 1,722,000 barrels of other cereals left the country. In 1822 776,000 barrels of wheat and 1,948,000 barrels of other kinds were exported. It is manifest from these figures that tillage was being practised on a large and expanding scale. Taking the average produce of an acre of land under corn as equivalent to six barrels, it is evident that to produce such an export as that of 1822 some 400,000 acres of Irish soil must have been under cultivation. Besides the corn exported, there must have been a large

production for home consumption. Although wheaten bread was not much eaten, except in the towns, oatmeal was an important secondary food, and indeed during the "meal months" (July and August) when the old potatoes were uneatable and the new crop was not ready, was still the staple diet, so that besides the land growing corn for export, a considerable area must have been occupied with corn for home consumption. The great corn-growing counties were Kildare, Carlow, Kilkenny, Queen's County, Tipperary and Limerick. The produce of pasturage, such as bacon, butter and salt meat shows a similar expansion. The export figures for 1811 will sufficiently illustrate this tendency:—

- Beef, 95,000 barrels.
- Pork, 110,000 barrels.
- Bacon, 310,000 fitches and 16,000 hams.
- Butter, 390,000 cwt.
- Bullocks, 54,000.
- Sheep, 21,000.
- Swine, 35,000.

On comparing these items with those for 1771—1777 given on page 55, it will be found that the export of beef, taking salt meat with bullocks, is stationary, but that any failure to show progress in this direction is amply compensated by a larger production of butter and an enormously increased export of pork and bacon. The pig, once comparatively seldom mentioned in Irish records, had now become universal. Every cottier kept one, feeding it on potato refuse, and bacon-curing establishments sprang up at Limerick, Clonmel and Water-

ford. The salt meat trade was centred at Cork, a great victualling station, not only for merchantmen sailing to America, but also for the Navy blockading French ports, and for Wellington's troops in the Peninsula. The trade in live cattle, which had received so severe a blow in the middle seventeenth century, was beginning to revive, even under the unfavourable circumstances of war time with its heavy demands on shipping for the transport of troops and stores. The substitution of the steamer for the sailing-ship, which began, as far as Ireland is concerned, in 1816, favoured the growth of this traffic, which requires ample space and rapid transit.

Dairy farms were increasing in number, and, according to one authority, covered more land than the grazing farms. Just as in Young's time, the extra growth of corn seems to have been achieved without inflicting injury on, if not rather to the advantage of the pasturage system. The great Napoleonic War continued for fifteen years after the Union and, even though the hostile fleets were shattered at Trafalgar in 1805, swarms of privateers made maritime communication dangerous and uncertain, so that overseas competition was excluded, and Irish producers had the British market to themselves. Altogether it is evident that, so far as concerns the production and sale of its commodities, rural Ireland during the early part of the nineteenth century was in a most prosperous condition.

But when the eye is turned from the product to the individual producer, particularly to the humble toiler himself, a much less satisfactory view is presented. Ireland exhibited the extraordinary and anomalous

spectacle of a country, whose increasing prosperity failed to improve the condition of its individual citizens. As the profits of agriculture swelled, a severe competition for farms set in. The Irish landlord was frequently an absentee, or, if resident, too often a careless spendthrift, leaving everything to an agent, reckless of the welfare of his tenants or the future of his property, provided that his income was maintained at its accustomed level. Prospective tenants were encouraged to bid against each other and saddle themselves with a rent that only an uninterrupted succession of good seasons could enable them to pay. A bad harvest meant the accumulation of arrears, a series of bad harvests ruin and eviction. Throughout Irish history no policy has been more bitterly resented or given rise to more vengeful feeling than that of dispossession. In many parts of the country the land offered the sole means of subsistence, the sole opportunity of profit. If it were lost, the tenant sank to the level of a mere labourer, earning a scanty wage in summer and half-starved in winter. What wonder then that men eagerly competed for its possession, or, in fury and despair at its loss, turned on those deemed responsible for their calamity, and endeavoured to exact a wild, but, as they thought, a deserved retribution.

“ You take my life
When you do take the means whereby I live.”

Human nature being what it is, men will often take the law into their own hands in such cases, whether the circumstances be those of an evicted tenant, a striker who sees another workman taking his place, or cast-

aways struggling for the last biscuit or last drain of water.

Hence in large measure the dismal and repulsive series of outrages, which disgraces the nineteenth century in Ireland, the landlord murdered as he returned from the hunt, the supplanter struck down in his own farmyard and bludgeoned to death as he lay, the furious vendetta, which continued from generation to generation and sometimes spared neither sex nor infancy. The Irish peasants, unlike those of most other countries, can rarely be induced to regard the relations of landlord and tenant as a matter of ordinary business contract, terminable on failure to fulfil the stipulated terms. Whether it is due to some half-conscious recollection of the tribal tenure, or to a readiness to form strong local attachments, it is an undoubted fact that Irishmen almost always acquire a strong personal affection for their holding, unprofitable though it may be. They seldom regard it in the detached English manner as a mere means of livelihood, to be exchanged if better should offer. Eviction, therefore, is felt as a bereavement, an outrage to the sentiments, a breaking up of the links that connect the family.

The situation was still further complicated by the frequent intervention of the "middleman" between the landlord and the actual tiller of the soil. In some cases, in order to avoid dealing with a great number of small holders, the landlord let his lands in large parcels to speculators, who paid him a stipulated rent, and sub-let in turn to smaller men. This system was even worse in its results than the direct letting, for the middleman was, as a rule, a mere venturer, and could only make

his profits by grinding the faces of his under-tenants. The great landlords, though they had the usual failings of the *grand seigneur*, carelessness, love of luxury and ostentation, impatience of detail, limitation of outlook, were in most cases men of heart, and, if they could be approached, would often make concessions to lighten the burden of their tenants. But the middleman was usually a parvenu, risen from the ranks of the peasantry. The sentiment of *noblesse oblige* had no weight with him. He was driven into narrow grasping ways by the circumstances of his position. If a tenant fell heavily into arrears, it was easy for an unscrupulous middleman to entangle him in such a mass of debt that eventually the holding would fall into his hands. The land agents, too, in the absence of any supervision, sometimes showed themselves tyrannical and oppressive, wasting the resources of the estate for their own advantage, or exacting the last farthing from the tenants so as to be able to please their masters with a profitable rent-roll.

There were other disturbing factors. The exaction of tithes for the support of a church, whose adherents numbered less than a tenth of the population, was bitterly resented and, on occasion, fiercely resisted. Blood flowed freely and a number of lives were lost in encounters between the peasantry and the police escorting parties sent to distrain for non-payment of tithe. Agrarian grievances had given rise to secret societies of the Whiteboy type, which held the country in terror, enforcing their decrees, whether directed against tithes, high rents, low wages or the importation of cheap labour, by intimidation, outrage and even murder. The names of these organizations varied from place to place,

Caravats and Shanavests, Moll Doyle and Her Children, Rockites, Ribbonmen, Blackfeet, but their methods were everywhere much the same. Many repressive Acts were passed, the administration of which was entrusted mainly to the local magistrates, who, as being either landlords or clergymen of the Established Church, could hardly preserve the desired impartiality in tithe or agrarian cases. Thus throughout a great part of rural Ireland, but particularly in the south and west, where distress was more sharply and frequently felt, a sort of guerrilla war simmered perpetually, and prevented the country from reaping the full benefit of its agricultural prosperity.

The condition of the people shows little improvement from the preceding century. The housing was still miserable; the traditional cabin, one storey high, one-roomed, mud-floored, mud-walled, with tiny windows, inadequate doors and grateless hearths, housed the majority of the population. This kind of dwelling was cheap, easily constructed and even more easily destroyed. It could be erected in a few weeks at a cost of about £6. Thus the increase of the population was greatly facilitated, for no couple starting house-keeping need wait long for a home. Landlords desiring to multiply the number of their subservient voters and useful labourers readily gave permission to build. The potato, with its accommodating disposition and generous crop, played a part in fostering this increase. A cabin and a potato patch sufficed to shelter and support a family, precariously, no doubt, and not in any very great comfort, but still, as a general rule, without any positive hardship. The population under these circumstances in-

creased with extraordinary rapidity. Estimated at about 4,000,000 at the time of the Union, it was returned at 6,801,000 by the Census of 1821, and at 8,916,000 by the Census of 1841, and continued to grow until rudely checked by the Famine of 1846—7 and the subsequent emigration.

The presence of this vast mass of labour, competing for employment, having no other occupation than agriculture and prepared to put up with a low standard of living, naturally depressed wages. The evidence of the Poor Enquiry Commission (1835) throws a remarkable light on the struggle for existence at this period. In Leinster, where, on account of its proximity to Dublin, wages were probably highest, 10d. was the maximum for the ordinary agricultural labourer, while in Connaught the daily wage was a mere 4d. or 5d. Considering the country as a whole, the average daily wage was 8d. in summer, and 6d. in winter, and taking into account the scarcity of employment, 2s. 6d. a week was as much as the average labourer could expect to earn all the year round. Out of this annual total of £6 10s., we are told that the labourer would have to pay £2 for the rent of a cabin and £4 for the rent of a potato patch,¹ leaving him apparently ten shillings for clothing his family and all other incidental expenses. A household of this kind, until the sons and daughters were growing up and able to bring in an extra few shillings weekly, would be constantly living on the verge of calamity. But matters were frequently not conducted on a money basis. The rent both of cabin and potato

¹ Dr. Alice Murray, "Commercial Relations between England and Ireland," p. 363.

patch was often paid by the performance of a stipulated amount of labour in the year, sometimes as much as 250 working days, or nearly forty-two ordinary weeks.² If the rent was demanded in money, the sum required was raised by the sale of a pig, fed on the surplus potatoes that remained after feeding the family. Hence the time-honoured joke about the pig being "the gentleman that pays the rent." The increase of population had brought such pressure on the means of subsistence that few labourers were able to keep cows, though this had once been a common practice, and one of considerable benefit to the community, for milk was a valuable supplement to the potato. Now nothing was left to drink with meals but water or buttermilk, the rather thin and sour liquid left after butter has been formed in the churn. Irish people, in modern times, have seldom drunk beer at meals, and tea was still too dear to be a popular beverage.

It is evident from these details that the conditions of living in rural Ireland were thoroughly unsatisfactory. Gradually ameliorative agencies came into play. The grievances concerning tithes were removed by an Act of 1838 which converted the tithe into a fixed rent charge, payable not by the tenant, who was almost invariably a Roman Catholic, but by the landlord, who was usually a Protestant. Even at the same date the terrible pressure of population on subsistence was in some measure relieved by emigration, not so much to America as to the prosperous and rising industrial cities of Great Britain. It is worthy of note, too, that the first half of the nineteenth century was the palmy time of recruit-

² *ibid.*, p. 362.

ing in Ireland. Probably at least a third of the British Army at this time was composed of Irishmen. The families emigrated across channel, the unattached young men enlisted. Besides these permanent departures, there was a large quantity of migratory labour, passing annually to England or Scotland for the harvest. This custom is still to be found in the extreme west of Ireland, which is in many respects an economic museum, so carefully does it preserve in its daily life many features of the past.

Furthermore some effort had been made to cope with the problems of distress and destitution by the establishment in 1838 of a public system of poor relief. Before that date there was little or no provision for the relief of indigence or disease in rural Ireland. The large cities possessed their Houses of Industry, institutions analogous to, and managed on much the same lines as a modern workhouse. Besides these, there were, chiefly in the towns, a number of almshouses, hospitals and dispensaries, founded by charitable endowment, doing excellent work, but too limited in their scope to deal with national emergencies. But in the country there were only the County Infirmarys, established by an Act of 1765. These were supported partly by Government, partly by county funds. Their endowments were miserably small; very few counties could maintain more than thirty or forty beds, while some could only make provision for eighteen patients. But while there was in the counties this exiguous organization for the relief of suffering arising from disease, there was nothing for the relief of distress arising from poverty. Whenever a bad harvest made food scarce and prices high, bringing the

wolf of hunger to the door of the labourer and small farmer, there was no agency of relief close to the doors of the distressed. They flocked in numbers to the large towns hoping to find employment there, or in the last resort, charity. In the country there was no hope of assistance, unless the local landowner came to the rescue. In some cases the country gentry helped their tenantry by organizing relief works, often rather of an ornamental than useful character. But there was no national relief organization.

The Commissioners, who were appointed in 1833 to inquire into the state of the Irish poor, suggested that a system of relief should be established for the benefit of the sick and infirm poor, but that the able-bodied should be employed on public works, bog reclamation, draining, fencing and the like. Their plans were set aside, perhaps not unreasonably. It is not easy to improvise useful works, which usually require the careful organization of labour, the collection of quantities of materials, tools and machinery. A town may find it possible to keep a public work standing ready to employ the distressed, as in the case of Dublin and its great Circular Road, but how is a county to provide similar standing works for a widely scattered population, part perhaps living far up remote mountain glens or on almost inaccessible islands? Somewhat naturally, therefore, the Government fell back on the workhouse system, and, by the Act of 1838, established a hundred of these institutions in Ireland. Employment for the able-bodied, relief for the sick or aged, was only to be found within the walls of the workhouse. Not until 1847, the Famine year, was the original Act amended

so as to allow the granting of outdoor relief. The administration of the workhouses was entrusted by the Act of 1838 to Boards of Guardians, part elected, part *ex officio*.

The system had obvious defects, the absence of proper classification, the herding of the decent and the wastrel together in one prison-like institution, the failure to segregate the young from bad influences and unhealthy surroundings, the faulty finance which made no provision to assist those poor unions which, as containing a large number of people on the verge of distress, might find themselves confronted with the double problem of scanty funds and numerous applicants. But undoubtedly it was a great improvement on the preceding state of things, and was found very useful in coping with the terrible calamity of the Famine, which was soon to come upon the unhappy land.

The Famine of 1846—7 was by no means the first visitation of its kind. When a country lives by subsistence farming, and has no second crop to fall back on, when its standard of living is already so low that there is no possibility of tiding over by tightening belts and employing substitutes, when transport is slow and difficult, preventing the speedy distribution of food brought from abroad, periodical famines are inevitable. Within recent times both India and Russia have suffered in the same way as Ireland and from the same causes. In 1817 and 1822 there had been very severe distress. Throughout the eighteenth century famine had been recurrent. The obelisk at Killiney commemorates a hard winter of 1741, and it is a characteristic illustration of the type of

relief work constructed by local landowners on such occasions.

The first sign of coming scarcity was perceived in the autumn of 1845, when it became evident that the potato crop of that year would be inadequate for the support of the people. The Government arranged for the baking and storage of large quantities of ship's biscuit, and bought in America £100,000 worth of Indian corn and meal, to be deposited in a reserve depot in Cork. By drawing on these stores, and by utilizing the oat crop, the winter of that year was passed over successfully, and it was hoped that a good harvest in 1846 would bring plenty into the land. These hopes were doomed to disappointment. The potato disease was worse than in 1845. Three-quarters of the total crop perished. In other words, seeing that 6,000,000 souls of the total population of over 8,000,000 were dependent on the potato for their daily food, there was food available for 1,500,000, and the remaining 4,500,000 must go short. The oat crop could not be relied on for much assistance, as it also had suffered and its yield was only two-thirds of the expected amount. The Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel, who had been Chief Secretary in Ireland during a period of distress in 1817, showed himself deeply concerned over the prospect which lay before Ireland. In January, 1846, he had broken with his own party and abandoned his life-long principles by repealing the Corn Laws, which restricted the free importation of corn and prevented the procuring of help from foreign countries. But the converse step, the restriction of export from Ireland, was not taken. An embargo on export had hitherto always been one of the first actions

in dealing with distress, and had been put in force so recently as 1803. In the meantime, however, the doctrine of *laissez faire*, of non-interference with the ordinary course of commerce had come to dominate the minds of British statesmen, and possibly undue adherence to this economic principle lay at the root of this failure to reserve to the country its own home-produced food supplies. The repeal of the Corn Laws was a relaxation of restraint on trade; an embargo was just the opposite. As early as November, 1845, O'Connell had called for the prohibition of the export of corn, but in vain. The Irish people, who have never been pedantic adherents of any economic theory, resented the Government inaction in this respect. In the year 1846 1,875,000 quarters of corn left the shores of Ireland, an amount sufficient to have fed at least an equal number of people during the interval between the harvests of 1846 and 1847.

It may however be pleaded, though it is hardly an adequate defence, that it was not altogether easy to turn the current of Irish trade backwards. Then as now, the flow of Irish commodities was towards the ports and thence across channel. The corn-producing districts lay in the east and midlands, the areas most likely to be distressed in the extreme south and west. Between these there was not at this time any communication other than by road. The trunk railways of Ireland were in process of construction, but none of them had as yet spanned the country. In January, 1847, the present Great Southern and Western was not open for public traffic beyond Kildare. The Midland Great Western, which, as serving the west, would have been especially useful, was still in the contractor's hands, and not even the first

section, that from Dublin to Enfield, in Meath, was yet completed. The movement of large quantities of food from the midlands to the south and west by road would be a tedious business, requiring the collection of many horses and vehicles and the organization of routes. A marked feature of the famine of 1846—7 was the suddenness of its descent, following swiftly and unexpectedly on the lesser scarcity of 1845—6. The western coastline would have fared even worse than it did, had it been obliged to wait until the corn of the east was carted to the remote creeks of Cork and Kerry and over the rugged wastes of Connemara. As a matter of practical convenience, it was found easier to send relief by sea than by land. By this route came the Indian corn and meal from America, which was distributed to the people in the form of stirabout, and is still well remembered as a striking characteristic of the famine time. In 1847 4,179,000 quarters of corn and meal were imported into Ireland, almost all on Government account, and about two-thirds of this amount consisted of Indian corn and meal.

Relief was made dependent on the performance of labour, except in cases of physical inability. A number of relief works were set on foot. In October, 1846, 114,000 persons were employed on these; in March, 1847, no less a total than 734,000, representing with their families a total of some 3,000,000 souls. Nearly half the population of the country was being supported by Government. This represents a gigantic administrative task, greater by far than the feeding of any army that had yet appeared in history. But great as it was, it was not sufficient to save the people from the

threatened disaster. Starvation came to many places, particularly to those in isolated situations and with bad communications, and on the heels of starvation came its invariable companion, pestilence. No historical episode has so stamped itself so deeply on the memory of the Irish peasant as the "Black '47." Even to this day very old men and women relate terrible stories of the crowded, fever-stricken workhouses, where deaths happened almost every hour, and coffins could hardly be procured in sufficient quantity to bury the dead, of the mother found fallen by the wayside with the living infant sucking at the dead breast, of desperate hungry men slashing their cattle with knives and drinking the blood of the beasts.³ Judging by the Census Returns of 1851, at least 150,000 persons perished during the period of distress. Most of these fell victims to the epidemic of typhus fever, which accompanied and was caused by the famine.

Of the survivors many, in horror at the catastrophe, and fear of its recurrence, fled the country. A great tide of emigration set in, not only to Great Britain, as of old, but to the new country whose corn had come to Ireland in distress, the United States of America.

"They say there's bread and work for all,
And the sun shines always there,"

is the characteristic song of the Irish emigrant. During the decade 1851—1860, 1,163,000 persons left the shores of Ireland, of whom the great majority went to America. That emigration has continued in diminishing volume to the present day, though the destitution, which pro-

³ G. Locker-Lampson, "State of Ireland in the Nineteenth Century," p. 271.

duced it, has long since passed away. In its origin it was a relief from the terrible congestion, which had probably contributed to produce and certainly aggravated the famine. Now it is an unnecessary drain, for it can scarcely be maintained that the country at present is unable to support its population.

Another immediate consequence was the passing of the Incumbered Estates Act in 1849. This was the first step in the long process, which within a period of some seventy years brought about the displacement of the old race of Irish landlords. Many of the old families, partly through extravagance, partly through losses due to the essentially unsound system on which their estates were worked, partly again to the recurring necessity to provide for daughters and younger sons, had become heavily entangled in debts, mortgages and other charges. Further losses due to the non-payment of rent by tenants during the Famine proved the culmination of misfortune and confronted the landowner with ruin. Under the existing law the sale of a hopelessly encumbered estate could only be conducted through the Court of Chancery, an extremely slow and expensive process. The new Act established a special court for the disposal of such properties. It contained provisions to facilitate sale to the creditors of the owner, the court conducting the transfer and guaranteeing the title. By 1859, when this tribunal was renamed the Landed Estates Court, 3,547 estates had been sold at a price of over twenty-five millions sterling, and over 7000 new purchasers had been established in possession.⁴ The idea at the base of this legislation was that the sale of these properties would

⁴ M. Dillon, "History and Development of Banking in Ireland," p. 5.

bring new capital, new men and new methods into Irish agriculture, to the benefit of all concerned. It was thought that English and Scotch farmers might buy land and introduce the agricultural system of their countries. These expectations were for the most part disappointed. Very few cross-channel purchasers appeared. The new owners differed little in their methods from the old. The statesmen of 1849, even with the fearful drama of the Famine before their eyes, failed to perceive that practically all the troubles of rural Ireland had their centre and origin in the depressed state of the Irish tenantry. The Incumbered Estates Act contained no provision for ameliorating the condition of the peasantry. Under these circumstances a change of landlords produced no more effect than, to take a convenient analogy, would be caused by a change of masters in a "sweated" city trade.

A further indirect result of the Famine was the introduction of sharp foreign competition into the Irish agricultural system. The British Corn Laws had operated as a strong measure of protection for the home producer; when they were abolished he was exposed to the rivalry of the whole world. The American corn, which came to Ireland in 1847, was destined to be the forerunner of a stream of competitive American produce, which poured into the ports of Great Britain and Ireland and caused great changes in the economic system of both countries. Improvements in transportation due to the general use of steamships and the spread of railways began to produce their full effect not only at home but abroad. The first passage by steamer across the Irish Sea was made in 1816. The first Irish trunk line

to be completed was that from Dublin to Cork, which was opened for traffic in 1849. The carriage of goods from Dublin to Holyhead became a matter of five or six hours instead of one or two days. Conveyance of heavy loads by land from, say, Athlone to Dublin occupied about four hours instead of the same number of days. The cost of carriage was also greatly reduced. But progress in these directions operated even more strongly in favour of more remote countries. The duration of the Atlantic voyage, for instance, was reduced from three months to a fortnight. Corn grown on virgin prairie soil, freehold or lightly rented, subject to little or no taxation, its former handicap of distance immensely diminished by rapid steam communication, began to appear in the markets of Europe at a price lower than that of native grain. Irish farmers found tillage unprofitable and turned their energies in other directions. The export of corn from Ireland gradually dwindled. Wheat has almost gone out of cultivation. Oats is still the main crop, though its acreage is much reduced, and a large quantity of barley is grown for the breweries and distilleries, which are so prominent a feature in Irish industrial life. Very little corn of any kind is now exported. On the other hand, before the great war with Germany, Ireland imported enormous quantities of corn and flour.

The loss of the corn trade has been made good by a remarkable expansion of the trade in live cattle, which is now more than twelve times as great as the figures of 1811 quoted on p. 91. This trade is very much greater than the old export of salt beef, but is still in a rudimentary form, and capable of larger development. For

instance, it may be remarked that the greater proportion of the animals exported are "store cattle," lean and unfinished. The fattening for the market is done in Great Britain, though there is no particular reason why it should not be done in Ireland, which possesses some of the richest pastures in the world. Nor is there any valid reason why the killing should not be done at home, thus saving a considerable sum in freight charges and retaining such valuable bye-products as hides, horns and hoofs to form the raw material for local subsidiary industries. The cattle trade, by its sheer bulk, has brought wealth to the Irish farmer, but it is not organized as it should be and much of the profit is allowed to pass to other hands.

The Famine also, by providing a most impressive illustration of the condition of the Irish peasantry under the existing system of land tenure, led inevitably to agitation directed to removing the evils of that system. About 1852 a Tenant League was established to work for this object. Its efforts were mainly directed to securing the tenant from the exaction of an exorbitant rent, protecting him from arbitrary and unjust eviction, and assuring him compensation for improvements made. In Ulster, more fortunate than the rest of the country, a custom, which, it will be remembered, was ineffectually challenged by the Marquis of Donegall, had long prevailed, by which the outgoing tenant was permitted to sell his interest to the incoming tenant on giving up possession. At the same time a tenant who fulfilled the conditions was left undisturbed and, though rents might be periodically revised, the force of public opinion prevented the imposition of such a rack-rent as would render

the tenant's interest unsaleable and worthless. This was the celebrated Ulster Custom, which the Tenant League sought to embody in law and to extend to the whole of Ireland. Its programme was alliteratively described as the "Three F's", Fair Rent, Fixity of Tenure, Freedom of Sale. But it was long before the landed interest, dominating the House of Lords and still powerful in the House of Commons, could be brought to accept such demands as these in their entirety. Small concessions were grudgingly given, but no notable advance was made until 1870, when Gladstone's Land Act allowed the tenant to claim compensation for improvements made by him, and checked unjust eviction by compelling the landlord to pay the tenant, if he were evicted for any other reason than non-payment of rent, a considerable sum of money as "compensation for disturbance." Thus the "fixity of tenure" was practically attained, and a great step made towards the free sale of the tenant's interest. The artificial settlement of rents was as yet a thing abhorrent to the ruling powers at Westminster. This Act is, however, remarkable as containing the germ of the real solution of the land problem. John Bright was firmly convinced that the agrarian difficulty in Ireland would never be settled until the tenant became the owner of his holding. His arguments induced Gladstone to insert in the Act provisions by which, under certain conditions, advances were to be made from State funds to enable tenants to purchase their lands. This was a step, though but a small one, in the right direction.

However, rural Ireland was far from being pacified. The power of the landowner was still very great and not

always judiciously exercised. Clever agents found means to evade the operation of the law. The tenants were not secure against rack-renting, and their legal protection against eviction was sometimes illusory. The force of foreign competition, particularly that from America, was felt with increasing severity. At the same time there came successions of bad seasons, culminating in 1879 in a failure of about two-thirds of the potato harvest and a large deficiency in other crops. Help, both public and private, was promptly forthcoming, and the scenes of 1847 were not repeated, but the small farmer saw his position becoming daily more precarious and experienced an increasing difficulty in paying his rent. So the protagonists of this struggle stood still facing each other with unsatisfied grievances in their hearts, the one resenting the legislation that had done so much to injure his property and lower his position, the other harassed by pressure of circumstances, toiling in vain to meet heavy demands, and hating from the bottom of his soul the person for whose benefit he was obliged to expend so much of his labour. The landlord looked on the tenant as a creditor regards a debtor threatening default. The tenant's feelings towards the landlord were those of a debtor towards the urgent creditor whose pressure is driving him to ruin. The situation was one in which violent action of some kind was only too likely to occur.

In October, 1879, mainly through the exertions of Michael Davitt, a Land League was formed under the presidency of Parnell, stating as its objects (1) the reduction of rack-rents, (2) the obtaining of the ownership of the soil by the occupiers of the soil. Its policy

was outlined as the defence of those threatened with eviction for refusing to pay unjust rents, and the pursuit of such reform in the laws as would enable every tenant to become the owner of his holding by paying a fair rent for a number of years. A vehement campaign was directed against landlords, particularly those who practised eviction or exacted rents which the League considered unfair. There had been agrarian troubles in Ireland before, but hitherto they had been blind revolts of ignorant leaderless peasantry. Now, however, what had been merely a tenants' movement was closely linked with politics and under the control of a political master-mind. The country was soon in a turmoil and the League was at issue with the Government. Some of the familiar characteristics of such a struggle were reproduced, but a novel feature was the use of systematic and organized boycotting against persons obnoxious to the League. The recalcitrant landlord, or the "land-grabber," who took a farm from which a tenant had been evicted, found life miserable and difficult to endure, for none, under pain of being himself boycotted, dare speak to him, work for him or supply him with goods. Outrages began to occur. The Government replied with repressive measures of considerable severity and arbitrariness. One of these, indeed, the arrest and detention of suspects without trial, resembled very closely the notorious *lettres de cachet* of the old French monarchy. Gladstone, however, wearied of the contest after two years, and in 1881 passed another Land Act, which practically conceded the first point of the Leaguers' programme, the reduction of rack-rents. A semi-judicial body, the Land

Commission, was established, having as its function the reviewing and fixing for a period of years of all rents brought before it, whether by landlord or tenant. When a rent was fixed, eviction was not permitted for fifteen years, except for non-payment or breach of covenant. At the end of the term the rent might be again revised. It was thought that this system would allow greater flexibility in the relations of landlord and tenant, and facilitate adjustments of rent to suit altered conditions. Rents, it was maintained, might be raised as well as lowered. Economists protested against State interference in a matter which should be left to open competition. The landlords complained that their property was taken out of their hands and delivered to the discretion of a third party. They anticipated, and correctly, as the event showed, that rents would almost always be diminished, seldom or never increased. They pointed out that their incomes would be lowered at each revision of rents and hence the measure, so far as they were concerned, would become a kind of gradual confiscation. There was less objection to the powers of the Land Commission to facilitate purchase by making advances of money.

In subsequent legislation the Government, taking as usual the path of least resistance, turned its attention to land purchase rather than the fixing of fair rents. Purchase, however, hitherto had been handicapped by lack of funds. The Ashbourne Act of 1885 provided £5,000,000 to be employed in advances to purchasing tenants. Acts of 1891 and 1896 provided further funds. Under these three statutes over 72,000 tenants have purchased their holdings, the purchase money

exceeding twenty-three million pounds.⁵ But still the transfer of ownership lagged. Each transaction had hitherto been voluntary as between landlord and tenant, the price being fixed by mutual agreement. Under these conditions many of the more prosperous tenants bought their holdings. But there was little hope that all Ireland could be dealt with in such a way. The landlord could not be expected to accept a sum less than that which would, if invested, produce his existing income. On the other hand, the tenant was usually averse to purchase, if he found that his repayment instalments, even though they might cease in a comparatively short period, would meanwhile be higher than his old rent. Eventually this gulf was bridged by the offer by the Government of a bonus on completed sales. In 1902 a conference of representatives of the Irish landlords and tenants assembled in Dublin, and agreed upon terms which were subsequently approved by the Government and utilized to form the basis of Wyndham's Land Act in the following year. This enactment provided for purchase advances amounting to the enormous figure of £112,000,000, of which £12,000,000 was to be spent in making up the difference between the parties, so that neither need feel any financial sacrifice.⁶ This Act has proved very successful, and the land has passed from one class to the other, with beneficial results to the country at large. It is a curious historical coincidence that the British Government, which two hundred and fifty years ago paid its debts by the gift of Irish land,

⁵ W. F. Bailey, "The Irish Land Acts," pp. 23, 25.

⁶ G. Locker-Lampson, "Ireland in the Nineteenth Century," p. 676.

should now find itself put to heavy expense to buy out the descendants of its settlers and restore the land to the descendants of the original occupiers.

Concurrently with the agrarian legislation, which mainly benefited the farmers, a great improvement has been made in the housing of the labourers. By a succession of Acts commencing in 1883 advances and grants from State funds amounting to over £8,000,000 have been allocated to assist local bodies to build houses suitable for the labouring population. Under this legislation about 40,000 houses have been built, accommodating some 200,000 souls.⁷ These dwellings are let at rents ranging from one to two shillings, a figure much below what would be required to repay their cost of construction, but, as in the case of land purchase, it has been held that the advantage to the community of having its members adequately sheltered outweighs the immediate monetary loss. Certainly the "labourer's cottage" seems everywhere to have replaced the mud cabin, with the result that squalor is no longer an invariable characteristic of the Irish countryside.

During the period from the Famine to the outbreak of the recent Great War, Irish farming has undergone a marked transition. From time immemorial the country has specialized in animal products, but during various periods, notably the first half of the nineteenth century, it has also developed tillage. Since the repeal of the British Corn Laws in 1846, Irish farmers have been discouraged by the increasing competition of

⁷ W. F. Bailey, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

foreign cereals and have turned more and more to the rearing of animals. Some figures comparing 1849 with 1914 will illustrate this trend.

AREA UNDER VARIOUS CROPS 1849 AND 1914.

		1849	1914
		ACRES	ACRES
Wheat	...	697,646	36,913
Oats	...	2,061,185	1,028,645
Barley	...	290,690	179,824
Potatoes	...	718,608	583,069
Turnips	...	360,069	276,872
Hay	...	1,141,371	*2,487,513

* In 1914 the figures given are for "Meadow and Clover."

Bread corn, it will be noticed, has almost vanished. The Irish wheat crop at the outbreak of war would hardly have provided loaves for a single Irish county. The staple crop, oats, is diminished by half. Other crops have uniformly decreased. Even the prosperity of the breweries and distilleries has not maintained the acreage under barley. The one crop, which shows an increase, has, in fact, doubled itself, is the hay, which is, of course, almost entirely grown to provide fodder for animals. This in itself implies a turning from tillage to animal rearing, which will be more strikingly shown by a comparison between the live stock census of Ireland in the same two years.

LIVE STOCK IN IRELAND, 1849 AND 1914.

		1849	1914
Horses	...	525,924	619,028
Cattle	...	2,771,139	5,051,645
Sheep	...	1,777,111	3,600,581
Pigs	...	795,463	1,305,638
Poultry	...	6,328,001	26,918,749

Sheep have more than doubled, cattle and pigs nearly doubled, while poultry has quadrupled. Ireland has evidently concentrated on the trade in which proximity still gave her an advantage, live animals and animal products. The animals are produced for the English market and exported alive, going out in the least profitable form, yet the sheer bulk of the trade makes it of enormous value. In an average year 700,000 head of cattle, of which rather more than one-third were fattened, the remainder lean, over 600,000 sheep and about 250,000 pigs are exported from Ireland, almost all going to Great Britain. The annual value of the trade at pre-war prices was about £13,000,000, or roughly one-fifth of the value of Irish exports. Animal products, such as bacon, eggs and butter, must also be taken into account when reckoning the value of the live animal factor in Irish economy.

It will be seen that, following the tendency to specialization so characteristic of modern industry, rural Ireland had become a vast cattle-ranch. In some parts not one field in twenty was cultivated. The animals increased so prodigiously that the country could not

provide fodder for the numbers it reared, and was obliged to import about 13,000,000 cwts. of Indian corn annually. Its porter and whiskey were more often than not made from imported barley. Its population naturally dwindled, as tillage died out and cow-herds took the place of husbandmen. But even this diminished people could not be fed out of the produce of its own lands. Over 7,000,000 cwts. of wheat in the grain and 4,500,000 cwts. of wheat flour had to be imported each year to provide loaves for Irish tables. It is, no doubt, all for the better that the profits arising from the great cattle trade have so improved the standard of living that bread has displaced the potato as the staple diet, and there is no longer such dependence on the uncertain tuber. Still it seemed anomalous that a fertile country, with few large towns, should have to rely on the outside world for its daily bread, should export good bacon and import mediocre, should send out excellent butter, and receive inferior brands, not to mention margarine, should fill every ship with its cattle and yet import frozen meat. Dependent on seaborne commerce, the country had travelled far from its ancient self-sufficiency. War was destined to produce some noteworthy changes in this system.

As the toll of vessels sunk by the German submarines increased, it became evident that every possible means of economising ship room would have to be employed and that imports must be reduced to the absolute minimum. One obvious method of producing this effect was to grow as much food as possible at home. The policy at first adopted to attain this end was the announcement of a liberal guaranteed price for corn and

potatoes, thus encouraging the farmer to put as much land as possible under crops. In the event of the market price not reaching the amount of the guarantee, the Government undertook to purchase the crop at the guaranteed figure. Thus the grower was assured of his market and his price, and the State, though incurring a danger of monetary loss, if it should be required to fulfil its guarantee, ensured an increased supply of home-grown food. As a matter of fact prices rose so rapidly that the market price rarely, if ever, fell below the guarantee and was often very much higher. This policy of the guaranteed price was applied to the whole of the United Kingdom and proved very successful. Not content with merely encouraging the practice of tillage and assuring to the cultivator his due profit, the Government, under the arbitrary powers of statutes dealing with a state of war, compelled the farmer to till. The order affecting Ireland was issued early in 1917 and directed that all occupiers of Irish land, whose tillage fell below a certain proportion, should increase their cultivation by an amount equal to one-tenth of the total acreage of the holding. The penalty in the event of failure to comply was that the land of the recalcitrant person should be taken over and cultivated by the Department of Agriculture, a body established in 1899 with the special duty of watching over Irish agriculture in much the same manner as the Linen Board had encouraged the linen industry. It was feared that this somewhat peremptory step might be resented as a State interference with the liberty of the subject, but the order was almost universally obeyed without demur, even though by a later regulation, the propor-

tion of tillage was increased to three-twentieths. The acreage under food crops rose very remarkably. In 1917 124,000 acres were sown with wheat, three-and-a-half times the area in 1914, oats increased to 1,463,000 acres, an expansion of about 40 per cent., and potatoes to 709,000 acres, an increase of about a quarter. In these three crops alone, the increased acreage under tillage amounted to over 600,000 acres and the extra produce would have sufficed to support the whole population, though the porridge pot might have had to replace the baker's oven for a time. The cattle trade did not suffer, and farmers were never so prosperous. It is to be hoped that some method will be found to make this tillage a permanent feature of Irish life.

CHAPTER VI.

Commerce and Industry since 1800

The effect of the new conditions produced by the Union may be traced with some accuracy till 1826, when unfortunately, on the cessation of all duties between Great Britain and Ireland, cross-channel Customs cease to be exacted and for some time there is little record of either internal or external trade, so that the investigator is reduced to the somewhat unsatisfactory expedient of estimating tendencies and drawing deductions from such facts as come within his own observation.

It is evident from many indications, that the woollen trade in the early years of the nineteenth century was in process of decay. It has already been mentioned that Ireland had almost ceased to export woollens and was yearly becoming a larger importer. The external competition, which was based on power spinning and weaving, conducted in large factories, was inevitably getting the better of the domestic methods of Ireland. The innumerable spinning wheels of Irish firesides, long as their owners worked and small as was the reward with which they were content, could not hold their own against the new spinning machinery of England, which could turn out yards, while the wheels were producing inches. The hand-loom weavers of Dublin or the country cottages produced a good cloth, but of narrow width and at a great expenditure of time. The power-loom was

much more effective. The weavers, if young, emigrated or turned to other employments, if advanced in years and unfit for other labour, accepted lower prices for their work, so as to compete with the factory article, and slowly starved on a mere pittance of a few pence daily. The industry might have been saved even at the eleventh hour by the introduction into Ireland of the English methods, but the chief Irish manufacturers lacked either the enterprise or the capital.

Irish workmen, too, in perhaps a greater degree than those of Great Britain, showed themselves hostile to the adoption of labour-saving machinery. Living on the perilous verge of indigence, they feared that the immediate result would be disemployment and distress, and did not see that the general consequent expansion of the industry would fully occupy all existing hands and provide work for others. To them it was as if they had been asked to forego all food for the coming week on the strength of a promise of plenty three months hence. The transition period would probably in any case involve hardship, and the masters did not always try to remove the fears of their men. Even in England there were riots directed against the use of machinery, and the reform, beneficial as it proved to be, was only carried by the high hand of the employers. In Ireland this class was weaker and less capable of facing the struggle. Even to this day it is difficult in southern Ireland to introduce labour-saving machinery into an existing business. Dockers prefer to see twenty men carrying bags of coal on their backs from a hold rather than three men unloading a ton at a time by means of a crane. They do not understand that coal unloaded

slowly and laboriously by hand must necessarily be shillings dearer than coal unloaded by a crane, and that dearer coal means less comfort to the whole city, and, since coal enters into the cost of every manufacture, higher prices for all commodities made in that town, and a proportionate handicap on every local trade. On the other hand, when machinery is introduced, it is both the duty and the interest of the employer to arrange alternative employment for any displaced men, so that more efficient production may not be achieved at the cost of even temporary unemployment. Consultation between employers and men could usually find some means of removing any passing hardship.

The result of lagging behind the times is clearly shown in the decay of the woollen industry, a gradual process, which was spread over some seventy years, from 1785 to about 1850. Yet the woollen industry had many advantages, the support of a legislature, an abundant supply of raw material, long experience, trained workmen. Still all these did not avail against excessive conservatism in employers and men.

The cotton trade fared better for a while. In importance it ranked as the second textile industry, coming next to linen, and having deposed woollens to the third rank. The annual value of its produce was stated as about £600,000 or £700,000, and it gave employment to 30,000 or 40,000 persons.¹ It was naturally the object of much solicitude at the time of the Union. Hitherto it had been protected by a heavy duty ranging from 30 to 50 per cent. and it was thought that if this duty, as a consequence of the Union, were lowered to 10 per

¹ Lecky, "Ireland in the Eighteenth Century," V., 399.

cent., English competition would prove very damaging. As a concession to these fears, the cotton industry was allowed to enjoy protection at the old rate for seven years before the reduced rates should become operative. The manufacture had come to be centred very largely in Belfast. Brooke, despite his Government backing, had fallen into financial difficulties, and Prosperous had sadly belied its name. Commencing later than the woollen industry, it was less bound by precedent and was in fact forced to adopt newer methods from the outset. Its coming to Ireland is associated with the establishment of large factories, employing in many cases the partially infirm, women and even children. According to Wakefield, the industry was first prosecuted in Ireland at the poor-house of Belfast. If the value of its produce given above is divided by the number of hands employed and some allowance made for cost of material, rents, interest on capital, etc., it will be seen that the average wage paid cannot have exceeded £15 a year, or somewhat less than 6s. per week. Probably men received somewhat more, women and children less. Poor as this figure seems to modern ideas, it was better than the contemporary wage in the linen manufacture, which was still in all its stages a domestic process, both spinning and weaving being performed in the cottages of the peasantry. During the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the cotton industry in the north is said to have been more profitable than the linen and to have drawn off many of the workpeople from the latter. This statement is borne out by the figures of the linen export, which show no permanent increase at this time. Some 37,000,000 yards

of linen were despatched from Ireland in 1802, and again in 1810 and 1820 the same figure recurs.

But the cotton industry, though efficiently conducted and very promising, still remained very small as compared with the enormous bulk of the linen manufacture. If mechanical progress were applied to the linen industry, it was sure to forge ahead once more. If not, despite its large extent and firm hold on the national economy, it would probably dwindle by slow degrees, as the woollen trade had done, and finally disappear altogether. It was saved from this fate by the energy and foresight of those whose capital and livelihood were invested in the business. Hitherto it had been the custom for the women to spin at home, while the men prepared the flax for spinning and subsequently wove the thread into cloth on the small hand-looms, which were to be found in almost every cottage in the linen districts. When a sufficient length of cloth had been woven, the weaver carried it on his back to the nearest town to sell it to the merchant. These merchants were, of course, persons of capital and intelligence, and were quick to notice any influence tending to the detriment of their trade. The details of what actually happened are somewhat obscure, but it is evident that the example of the cotton industry as regards factory production was followed. The machinery used for spinning cotton was modified so as to be suitable for flax. Steam power for flax spinning was introduced about 1828 and the first factory using power-looms commenced work in 1850. The industry entered on a new era of prosperity. It was of course completely changed in its character, coming to be centred in industrial towns, particularly

in Belfast, which was a good port in a central position, well situated for export to either Scotland or England. It is likely that on the whole this change was to the advantage of those concerned, for the evidence goes to show that the lot of the linen weavers was somewhat precarious. Like most domestic workers, they had a tendency to produce more than the market could carry, with the result that prices fell and the reward of labour diminished. Most of the weavers in the north found it necessary to till a piece of ground in order to grow potatoes or oatmeal for their subsistence in case weaving should prove unremunerative. If all failed, they enlisted in the army, or emigrated to America. Their work, even in prosperous times, was not well paid. Operating as single units, they were at an immense disadvantage in bargaining with wealthy merchants, who could afford to wait in order to get a better price, whereas the weaver would be faced with immediate privation, if he attempted such a policy. On the whole the factory system, bringing better wages and security of employment, was a boon to the weavers, even though it necessitated a departure from their homes in the country and a new settlement in the crowded and featureless industrial quarter of a great city. When the linen industry came to be fully organized in this way, it seems to have soon reasserted its superiority over the cotton manufacture, which was, besides, liable to severe competition from Lancashire. By the middle of the century the Irish cotton industry was rapidly declining, while the linen was in full prosperity. The abolition of the Linen Board in 1827 and the consequent withdrawal of State assistance was not felt, and the growth

of the industry during the last hundred years may be judged from recent figures, which show that in 1912 951,362 spindles and 36,942 looms were engaged in the manufacture² and the export stood at 1,163,000 cwts. valued at £14,112,000. Besides this there was exported over 23,000,000 lbs. of linen yarn valued at £1,732,000. Like many other northern industries, this has become dependent on foreign countries for its raw material, as Ireland has not been able to produce nearly enough flax to employ these multitudinous spindles.

Coming to the food and drink industries, a steady expansion goes on throughout the nineteenth century. Here English competition was not severely felt, and indeed, as the prosperity of English manufactures grew, the cross-channel market became ever richer, more extensive and more eager for Irish supplies. Each improvement in communication brought the British consumer and the Irish producer into closer contact and fostered trade between the two countries. Since 1801 there has been an enormous expansion in the amount and value of Irish trade. In 1803 the total value of Irish exports was £5,093,000.³ In 1913 their value was £73,000,000, a fourteenfold increase. But remarkable changes have taken place in the nature of the trade. In the first place it has become devoted to a single market, that of Great Britain. With the exception, perhaps, of linen, a great quantity of which goes to America and the colonies, Irish exports go to that market exclusively. In the eighteenth century, as has been seen, owing to artificial restraints, her trade went

² J. H. Sterling's article in "Times," Nov. 4th, 1919.

³ Dr. G. O'Brien, "Economic History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century," p. 433.

abroad. Now it has swung back into the short and convenient paths leading to the neighbouring country. Irish shipping is almost exclusively cross-channel. Irish produce is either not exported to foreign countries, or, if it is sent abroad, passes through England on its way. Thus, by imperceptible economic causes, one of the effects of the Navigation Acts is reproduced in modern times. On the other hand this concentration on cross-channel routes and pre-occupation with cross-channel markets is not now felt as a hardship, rather is it the deliberate choice of Irish producers, dictated to them by obvious pecuniary advantage. Why send goods to the distant and uncertain market when there is another near at hand ready to receive all that can be supplied to it?

Great Britain with its 40,000,000 of people, not one-tenth of whom are food producers, is an unlimited market for Irish food and drink, but does not require manufactured goods, unless they are of better quality than can be produced by her own innumerable artisans. In most classes of manufacture she has quantities of surplus produce ready to export. In the interchange, then, between the two countries, each tended to send those articles in which she had a special advantage. British manufactures were exchanged for Irish food. Irish industries not connected with food had a very hard struggle for existence, and, with the one striking exception of linen, fared very badly in the contest. Glass, despite its brilliant artistic promise, languished and declined. Silk showed a similar experience. Poplin decayed to such an extent that in 1862 it is said that

only 134 hands were employed in Dublin.⁴ Such commodities as boots, hats, pottery, nails, spades, which were once made in small establishments in every country town, are now produced in great specialized factories centralized in one district. Northampton has driven out the local bootmaker in Great Britain just as in Ireland, for its machines can produce an article on the whole more satisfactory than his, similarly with Birmingham and the small ironworker, Staffordshire and the potter. Towns which have not preserved or developed some special handicraft, in which they can challenge competition, tend to become trading centres for the rural districts around them, and rise or fall as agricultural prosperity increases or diminishes. With a few exceptions, such as Balbriggan, which has long enjoyed a reputation for hose, the smaller towns of Ireland did not develop any such speciality, and have become dependent on markets and fairs. Even in the larger cities the small trades died out under competition, but their place has been taken to a large extent by specialized industries suitable to local conditions.

Perhaps the earliest of these to appear were the brewing and distilling, both by-products of corn-growing. In view of the great increase of tillage after the Union, it was only natural that some of this corn should go to the vat and the still. The efforts of the Irish Parliament had succeeded in encouraging the taste for beer, and had not materially checked the old-established propensity for whisky. During the period following the Union the brewing industry prospered,

⁴ Dr. Alice Murray, "Commercial Relations between England and Ireland," p. 353.

and a tendency towards centralization became manifest. The larger firms bought up the smaller; the smaller country breweries disappeared and the whole industry came to be concentrated in a few large towns, notably in Dublin, which had obvious advantages in this respect, being close to the corn-growing midland counties. As yet little beer was exported, but the domestic market was thoroughly supplied. The remarkable rise of the firm of Messrs. Guinness dates from this period. In 1798 the firm was just coming to the front among the brewing concerns of Dublin. In ten months of 1797 it had sold nearly 12,000 barrels and made a profit of £6,000. In 1803 Arthur Guinness, the founder of the business, died worth only a few thousands. His son Arthur had by 1855 realised a fortune of £180,000 and in 1868 his grandson, Sir Benjamin Guinness, left assets sworn at £1,100,000. In 1886 the undertaking was converted into a limited liability company with a capital of five millions sterling. It is stated that the export trade was developed as a result of politico-religious animosities. Between 1797 and 1813 the Guinnesses had been prominent in opposition to the United Irishmen and to the Catholic party led by O'Connell and had become the target of newspaper attacks, some of which went so far as to hint at a retaliatory boycott of Guinness's beer. To safeguard the business, an export trade was established, which turned out to be the salvation of the industry. Local hostility died away and the export trade carried the reputation of the firm all over the world. An echo of this happily forgotten controversy may be heard occasionally in a jesting reference to "Guinness's black

Protestant porter." It is likely, too, that the brewing of a heavy dark beer instead of the light ales characteristic of Ireland in earlier times was primarily due to a desire to foster export by suiting the liquor to the taste of the English consumer, who has always liked a strong beer. The export of beer from Ireland in 1913 amounted to 859,000 barrels, valued at £2,269,000. Quite nine-tenths of this export was from the great brewery of Messrs. Guinness.

Distilling has had much the same experience as brewing, but began to export much earlier. During the period immediately following the Union about 4,000,000 gallons of spirits were produced annually in Ireland and about 300,000 gallons were exported. Distilling, like brewing, was only just beginning to develop into a factory industry. It had long been conducted under domestic conditions, and, indeed, was still so conducted in the case of the illicit maker of "poteen," who, in order to avoid paying the heavy excise duty on spirits, put up his still in an outhouse or perhaps in some cave or recess of the hills or bogs, where it might elude the eye of the gauger. Both brewing and distilling have in recent years been heavily capitalized and are now so strongly established both in the home and in external markets that, unless a sudden change takes place in popular habits, their future is probably assured. In 1913 7,415,000 gallons of spirits were exported, valued at £2,008,000. This is a twenty-fold increase on the figures at the beginning of the century. Both brewing and distilling, from the industrial point of view, are open to the objection that, while producing commodities of considerable value, they do

not furnish much employment, and that most of the labour engaged in the manufacture is not highly skilled. At present the brewing industry of Ireland only gives employment to about 5,000 persons, and the distilling to an even smaller number. The greater part of the work is done by the process of fermentation in the great silent vats and stills; very little is the result of human effort.

In 1859 Ireland began to develop an industry of quite a different type. The Belfast Harbour Commissioners, pursuing a bold and far-sighted policy of harbour improvement, had cut a deep straight passage from their city to the open sea, avoiding the worst part of the muddy, shallow and tortuous Lagan, and had set aside a piece of land beside the new channel as a site for a shipyard. A firm of Belfast ironmasters took a lease of this ground and in 1853 began to construct iron sailing-ships there. The enterprise was not proving very successful, for the firm had no previous experience of shipbuilding. In 1854 a new manager was engaged, a young, shrewd and ambitious Yorkshireman, named Edward Harland. In 1859, the difficulties of the original firm coming to a crisis, its interest in the yard was sold to Harland, who, two years later, took into partnership his draughtsman, G. W. Wolff, another capable young man. In this way the famous firm of Harland and Wolff came into existence. Its success seems to have been due to the foresight and good judgment of Edward Harland, who was struck with the possibilities of the site, with its long clear frontage, permitting the launch of the largest vessels, also with its proximity to the great ports of Liverpool and Glasgow.

Though the Clyde had its own yards, the Lagan, he considered, might well become, as to a large extent it has, the building and repair yard of the Mersey. As the linen industry, under the new mechanical processes, would employ many women and comparatively few men, there would always be a ready supply of the male labour required for shipbuilding. Harland, too, was the first shipbuilder to perceive the full possibilities of the use of iron in ship construction. Trusting to the strength of his material, he commenced to build ships much longer, in proportion to their beam, than had yet been constructed.⁵ Old sailors predicted that these long, coffin-like ships would break their backs in the first heavy seas, but the iron framework stood all the strains admirably. The new departure was generally approved, as it gave extra cargo space without undue addition to weight and consequent load on the engines. Developing the original idea to the utmost, Messrs. Harland and Wolff have come to specialize in great ocean liners. The firm now employs about 21,000 hands, and, with the linen industry, is the mainstay of a city of some 400,000 inhabitants. Another shipbuilding firm, that of Workman and Clark, has sprung up and prospered, and is now a worthy second to its older rival. This industry is purely exotic, its chief raw material, steel, is not produced to any extent in Ireland, and has to be imported. The finished product, the large ocean-going ship, is almost always exported.

It seems strange that Belfast, to which every ton of iron for its ships is brought at heavy cost, should be

⁵ C. H. Oldham, "History of Belfast Shipbuilding" (Statistical Society of Ireland, 20th Dec., 1910).

able to compete with the yards of Glasgow and the north-east of England, which have iron and coal at their doors. In this respect, as in some others, Belfast and its surrounding counties have followed the same path as England and Scotland. They have become specialized manufacturing districts, importing their raw material, sometimes from the uttermost parts of the earth, working it up to a highly finished state, and then exporting again. The linen industry similarly imports flax and sends out linen. Recently, too, the north has developed other industries of the same type, such, for instance, as Messrs. Gallaher's tobacco factory and a large rope-works, both of which import all their raw material and export almost all their produce. The analogy to Lancashire working up American cotton into "Manchester goods," and Yorkshire weaving Australian wool into suitings is very close. Success under such conditions is only to be obtained by careful organization, close attention to detail, and perpetual readiness to adopt new methods, whenever required.

Generally speaking, the industry of the south is of a different character, taking its raw material from close at hand, though, like the north, it too produces almost entirely for export. As animals and farm produce are the typical raw material of the South, its industries are almost all connected with food. One of the most prosperous of these is that connected with bacon-curing, which is mainly centred in the seaport towns of Cork, Waterford and Limerick. Ireland, being a country of small farms, rears an immense number of pigs. Unlike the cattle, these are for the most part exported as dead meat, and the killing, curing and smoking, which

used once to be a domestic process, is done at large specialized factories in the towns. The bacon and ham thus produced is an excellent article and, as it commands a ready sale and a high price in Great Britain, is usually exported. Incidentally it may be remarked that the bacon-curers have considerably improved the breed of Irish pigs. They found that, in order to produce the best bacon, it was necessary to have an animal of a certain type and to feed it in a particular way. Accordingly farmers dealing with the curers were notified that pigs corresponding with these conditions would be paid for at an enhanced price. By this means a more profitable variety of pig has been introduced and has taken the place of the older kind well remembered in the remoter districts, tall, active, long-legged, long-snouted, a great forager and said to be able to run and jump on occasion "like a greyhound."

Butter production has moved along different lines. Until about 1889 it was a domestic industry, the perquisite of the farmer's wife or daughter. Milk was produced in large quantities in the summer, when the cows were easily fed on the abundant grass. The surplus milk was made into butter at this season and exported, mildly cured, to Great Britain. In the winter the yield fell off and the markets could only be supplied with a heavily salted article, preserved from the previous summer, not nearly so palatable as the "mild-cured." The adoption by foreign competitors of the centrifugal cream separator, which made it possible to extract almost all the butter fat from the milk rapidly and independently of seasonal influence, produced a profound indirect influence on Irish butter production. The

farmers of Denmark were able by this means to produce "mild-cured" butter at any season and, furthermore, by growing crops suitable for cattle fodder in winter time, were able to feed their milch cows when the summer grass had gone, and so lessen the inequality between the summer and winter output of milk and butter. Thus they were able to supply Great Britain with a larger quantity of good butter all the year round, with the result that they began to trench more and more on the Irish farmer's market. Naturally retailers preferred to deal with those who could guarantee a constant supply, rather than with those who could only send at a particular season. The Irish farmer was confined to the summer market, when butter was cheap and plentiful, while his rivals could take advantage of the high prices and short markets of winter. The separator, in alliance with the system of winter dairying, was beating the churn as surely as the power-loom had beaten the hand-loom. However, about 1889 Mr. Horace Plunkett, as he then was, after careful study of the methods of Denmark, inaugurated a movement aiming at the reconstruction of the Irish farming system, particularly as regards its dairying branch. His idea was that Irish farmers should co-operate with each other, as the Danes had done, that they should club their money to purchase the latest and best machinery and should produce and sell their butter in combination. Central factories in large towns, such as have been successful in handling the bacon industry, were unsuitable in this case, as the milk could not travel more than a few hours' journey without risk of deterioration. It was necessary, therefore, to establish the factory among the milk-

producers, by whom it was to be owned and managed. These proposals were at first distrusted by the cautious and conservative Irish farmer, but eventually won his support, with the result that there are at present in Ireland over 400 dairy societies (or "creameries," as they are more generally known) with a membership list of 50,000 farmers, and a capital of nearly £1,000,000, all subscribed by those members. How far they have been repaid for their outlay may be judged from the fact that, in 1913, after satisfying the home demand, no less than 725,000 cwt. of butter, most of which was creamery produce, was exported from Ireland, its value being estimated at £3,735,000. However, though the Irish farmer has thus, by means of co-operation, turned to mechanical methods of butter production, he has as yet only learnt half the lesson set him by the Danes. He does not practise winter dairying and leaves his rival in secure possession for half the year.

The idea of co-operation, though it has received its most striking illustration in the department of dairying, is obviously capable of application to other branches of the national economy. Co-operative stores have been set up, co-operation has enabled farmers to buy implements, seeds and fertilizers to better advantage and to show a more united, and therefore a firmer front in negotiating the sale of their produce. An individual is as nothing in bargaining with a wealthy dealer, a co-operative society, speaking for many members, commands more attention. Co-operative loan banks, where the deposits are employed in secured loans to members, and co-operative factories have attained a measure of success, though as yet on a small scale.

Viewing the trade and commerce of Ireland just before the European War in the light of the import and export returns, which, as the country produces almost entirely for export, provide a fair indication of general economic tendencies, it will be found that two great industries, linen and live animals, account for nearly half of the whole export. In 1913, 1,100,000 live cattle were exported, valued at over £15,000,000. This figure is somewhat abnormal, owing to the prevalence in 1912 of foot and mouth disease, which delayed shipment. The normal average would be about three-fourths of the figures given. To the cattle must be added in 1913 657,000 sheep, valued at £1,272,000, 200,000 swine at £1,024,000, and 34,000 horses at £1,703,000. Thus the grand total of the live animal trade in 1913 would be about £18,000,000, or nearly a quarter of the whole export, which is estimated at £73,000,000. Linen yarn and cloth amount to nearly £16,000,000, a very close second to the animals.

No other industry attained to within a quarter of the magnitude of these giants. Poultry contributes about £4,000,000 in all, £1,000,000 being for dead birds and £3,000,000 for eggs. The heavily capitalized food and drink industries make a good appearance, butter showing nearly three-and-three-quarter millions, bacon and ham about the same. It is worth noticing that the value of the bacon exports is nearly four times the value of the live pigs sent out. The Irish pig, unlike the Irish bullock, does not usually go out "on the hoof." His value to his country is thereby much enhanced. The export of porter is given as 859,000 hogsheads, valued at over two millions and a quarter sterling, that of spirits

as over seven million gallons valued at about two millions.

Shipping produces a little over three millions, and a not very well-known cotton industry, probably mostly represented by the shirt manufacture of Londonderry, about two-and-three-quarter millions. Thus the whole might be shown in a tabular statement as follows:—

VALUE OF EXPORTS IN 1913.				MILLIONS STERLING
Live Animals	...	...	...	18
Linen Cloth and Yarn	...	...	...	16
Eggs and Poultry	...	...	...	4
Bacon and Ham	...	...	...	3.7
Butter	...	...	...	3.7
Ships	...	...	...	3.1
Cotton Goods	...	...	...	2.7
Beer (exclusive of duty)	...	...	...	2.2
Spirits (exclusive of duty)	...	...	...	2
Miscellaneous	...	...	...	17.6
TOTAL				73

The chief items included under "Miscellaneous" are hides, corn and flour, biscuits, potatoes, fish, machinery, condensed milk, rope, tobacco, wool and woollen goods, thread, drapery and raw cotton. None of these amounts to more than two millions in total value. "Corn and flour" show the reverse side of the trade in live animals. Save for about a million and a half cwts. of oats, valued at less than half a million, practically no Irish corn was

exported. This is an extraordinary falling off from the figures of the first half of the nineteenth century, and from the ideals of Foster in the eighteenth. Raw cotton is apparently a re-export from Belfast, as a similar figure appears among the imports at the same port.

Regarding the imports of 1913 in the same tabular way, it will be found that the total value is the same as the exports, namely, £73,000,000. The items might be summarized thus:—

VALUE OF IMPORTS IN 1913.					MILLIONS STERLING
Drapery	...	...	...	...	6
Cotton Goods	...	...	...	...	5
Maize (Nearly 15,000,000 cwts.)			...		4
Wheat (Nearly 8,000,000 cwts.)			...		3.3
Other Grains	...	...	...	...	1
Wheat Flour (Nearly 5,000,000 cwt.)					2.6
Coal	...	...	...	...	3.2
Flax	...	...	...	...	2.3
Bacon	...	...	...	...	2
Miscellaneous	...	...	...	...	43.6
TOTAL					73

The most prominent items included in "Miscellaneous" are boots and shoes, machinery, steel, sugar, linen goods, raw cotton, and timber. The cheap imported bacon came from America to the tables of the Irish peasantry, who rarely tasted the native product.

Maize is mainly used as a food stuff for animals, particularly for fattening pigs. Coal is, of course, an indispensable import. But the most striking feature of the returns is the heavy import of wheat and wheat flour to a country, which has been and may again become a corn-producer. In 1913 Ireland imported about $1\frac{3}{4}$ cwts. of wheat and $1\frac{1}{4}$ cwts. of flour per head of its population. If its sea communication had been utterly cut off in the Great War, as might well have happened, the native wheat would not have lasted a month, and Irishmen would have been obliged to return to the oatmeal and potato diet of their forefathers. Even the breweries and distilleries are largely dependent on imported grain. In 1913, 1,521,000 cwts. of barley were imported, mainly for this purpose. The great cattle trade, profitable as it undoubtedly is, might have cost the country dear if it imperilled the customary food supply.

While the sea was open, and freights were cheap, there was a natural tendency to purchase in the cheapest market, no matter how distant it might be, regardless of the effects on the home country of such a policy carried to its utmost limits. Thus Ireland became a mere grazing farm with only one of its many possibilities realized. The war, which has shaken so many ancient institutions, has shown the danger of such an economic system. In order to deal with war emergencies, various expedients were adopted, some of which, it is to be hoped, will be permanently embodied in the national life. For instance, before the war, the great and valuable linen industry was dependent on imported raw materials. Though flax is a fairly common crop in Ulster, 40,000 tons of this very important fibre were

imported, mainly from Russia and Belgium. Both of these sources of supply were closed from the very commencement of the war, and the manufacturers saw themselves faced with a possible stoppage. The gap was partly filled by import from Canada and New Zealand, but soon the submarine danger made it impossible to place too much reliance on the safe arrival of cargoes from distant colonies. On the other hand linen was urgently wanted for the manufacture of aeroplanes. The action of the linen manufacturers, under these difficult circumstances, was both businesslike and patriotic. Acting quietly and in combination, they secured a quantity of land in southern Ireland, where flax had never been grown before, and succeeded in growing the required additional quantity. The acreage under flax in Ireland increased from 49,000 acres in 1914 to 107,000 acres in 1917, and the linen industry was saved from a famine in raw material such as had nearly ruined Lancashire during the American Civil War. Obviously it would be well if such a reformation as this could be made permanent, for if raw material for an industry can be produced locally, that industry is in a much safer state than if it is dependent on foreign supplies, which may be interrupted at any time. A further consideration in this connection is the cost of freight, which has increased enormously and is not likely to diminish for many years. This acts automatically as a kind of protection for the home producer against his distant rival.

In fact, during the later stages of the war, the Irish producer of every kind, both industrial and agricultural, had practically a monopoly. Owing to the

scarcity of ships and deficiency of railway rolling stock movements of commodities, even within the United Kingdom, were restricted as much as possible. Thus Irish makers of such articles as matches, biscuits, jam, etc., had the home market almost entirely to themselves, and were presented with a splendid opportunity of establishing themselves therein so strongly, that when cross-channel competition should again revive, they might defy all assaults. It is as yet too early to judge how far they have risen to the occasion. As regards food, the producer was in even a stronger position, for he was secured in the home market, and in his external market, Great Britain, was free from competition. The Danes, for instance, no longer ventured to send butter across the North Sea, and the Englishman's share of that commodity was limited to the amount of British and Irish production divided by some 40,000,000, the total number of British consumers. This figure worked out at two ounces or less per week, and the scanty ration had to be eked out by margarine, the raw material for which is a colonial product. If Irish butter production had been larger, as by the adoption of winter dairying it might easily have been, there need have been no butter famine such as occurred more than once during the war in Ireland itself between Christmas and springtime, and the butter trade might not have been obliged to witness the rapid growth and secure establishment in popular favour of its once utterly despised rival, margarine.

Even the great live animal industry was not self-supporting, for it depended largely on maize and cake coming from abroad, and found itself in difficulties when the supplies were withheld or failed to arrive.

Though its market was assured, foreign supplies of chilled meat being shut off, and the British people consequently rationed almost as severely in meat as in butter, the cattle trade had to adapt itself to new conditions, one being that Ireland must raise *all* the feeding stuffs required for its animals, and not depend on imports. This end seems to have been attained and the chief danger, which was feared, namely, the depletion of the flocks and herds, either from lack of fodder or from unrestricted consumption, has been completely averted.

Looking at the future of Irish industry in general, the outlook contains many hopeful features. Owing to the war's ravages and the limited activity of industry for so many years, demand for produce of any and every kind is very great, and will probably remain so for some years to come. High freights will tend to discourage foreign competition. The home market will be assured almost as much as during the war period: On the other hand all Europe will be in such urgent need of commodities, that it will be only too ready to import, even allowing for the heavy cost of transportation.

There are numerous possibilities of development. For instance, over 10,000,000 lbs. of raw wool, valued at half a million pounds, left Ireland in 1913 and 35,000,000 lbs. of hosiery and drapery, valued at over six millions, entered the country. Once Ireland made up its own wool into cloth, and could probably do the like again. It is true that there are a few woollen manufacturers at work, but they complain that, as sheep are reared for mutton, not for their fleece, the quality of Irish wool has deteriorated, and hence, in order to

make the best cloth, wool or woollen yarn has to be imported. In 1913 six million pounds of these two commodities were imported at a cost of £400,000, almost as much as the farmers gained by the export of a much larger quantity of raw Irish wool. Probably this difficulty as to the quality of wool is not insuperable, for it would be in the power of the woollen manufacturers to encourage the improvement of Irish wool in the same manner as the bacon factories have improved the breeds of Irish pigs. They would be rewarded by getting rid of the high freights and vexatious delays in transit, which are destined for many a day to hamper those who are dependent on external sources for their raw material. Besides, there are many industries, such as rug and carpet-making, where the coarseness of the wool would be no impediment, but rather an advantage.

The best hope for the industrial future of Ireland seems to lie in the direction of developing at home the manufactures for whose prosecution she provides such an abundant supply of raw material. Butter and bacon are examples of such opportunities partly utilized. However, until the war gave the stimulus of high prices, there was little attempt to produce cheese, a valuable food, concentrating in a much less perishable form the chief characteristics of milk. Practically every other dairy district in the world preserved a great part of its summer surplus of milk in this way. Holland, Switzerland, Wales, the western counties of England, were famous for their cheeses. Even distant Canada was coming into the market of late years. Ireland alone was left out, possibly because the industry requires a more expensive form of equipment than the old-fashioned type of dairy-

ing. The creameries, which revolutionized the butter industry by introducing machinery and improved methods, will probably ere long extend their operations in this promising direction.

And turning to the great staple of Ireland, the cattle trade, although by its sheer magnitude it has certainly brought prosperity to rural Ireland, is conducted in a manner that gives much less profit than it might. The cattle and sheep leave Ireland, mostly young and unfattened, having given the least possible employment to Irish hands. In the days of the salt provision trade the killing and salting establishments at Cork and other places required a large amount of local labour, and subsidiary industries sprang up around. Until shown by actual experience few can realize how industries fit into each other and utilize each other's processes. In the industrial quarter of a southern town is a prosperous bacon factory. Across a narrow lane is a tanyard. At the back of the bacon factory is a store where the working people of the vicinity come to purchase at a cheap rate those portions of the animal which cannot be turned into bacon and have therefore to be disposed of immediately. Further down the street is a factory making artificial manure, which utilizes bones and other inedible refuse to make fertilisers. Contrast the profit accruing to the city from this treatment of the pig as compared with Dublin's treatment of the bullock. Through the capital of Ireland over 300,000 head of live cattle annually pass on their way to England without benefiting anyone other than a few auctioneers, herds, railway and dock hands. What would it mean to Dublin, if that 300,000 or a large part of them were killed there?

Would not skilled industries spring up and mitigate that dependence on unskilled work, which is at present the bane of that city, with its predominant population of "general labourers," "carters," "messengers" and "porters." From the hides of that 300,000 not merely Dublin but all Leinster could be shod. There is a small boot and shoe industry which might expand if these hides were turned into leather at home instead of being carried out unprofitably by the cattle. In the seventeenth century Scotland, like Ireland, used to send live cattle to England. Now, instead of live animals, she sends the "prime Scotch beef," which commands the best price on the London market. Thus her leather is kept at home and she has been able to develop at Kilmarnock a successful boot and shoe industry which sells its produce in every large town in the United Kingdom. Similarly Scotch wool is not exported in the raw state, but in the profitable form of "tweed." Of course the economic history of Scotland in the eighteenth century followed a different path from that of Ireland, but commercial success is to be attained by considering what can be done with what is to hand, not by grieving or recriminating over the past.

To take yet another illustration, in 1913 about £1,700,000 worth of timber was imported, and only one-eighth of that amount exported. Yet in almost every county there are bare mountain sides or desolate bogs, which were once covered by, and could easily be made to grow great quantities of profitable timber. In some districts, particularly around Killarney, the climate is such that trees attain great height and strength with the minimum of attention. Even from the very crannies in the rocks,

accessible only by the birds, the sturdy self-sown sapling pushes its way into light and maintains its existence. Timber is now about three times its former value and, as it requires little labour, is a crop largely unaffected by increases in the rate of wages. Of course here some form of State assistance or encouragement would be necessary, as the planter of woodland has to wait many years for his reward, and few private individuals could afford to lock up their capital for so long. Still the timber trade is one which has enormous possibilities, and, just as a dead meat trade leads to wool and leather industries, so it would be found that timber-cutting would lead to furniture-making or some other form of woodwork. The Black Forest district in Germany, to take a cognate example, developed a world-trade in wooden toys. Other timber countries, such as the western United States, Switzerland and Norway have been able to make extensive use of wood as a building material. This will be an important consideration, if brick, stone and mortar become as dear as they threaten to be.

Viewing the general course of Irish industry, therefore, as indicated by the external trade returns and confirmed by observation of internal conditions, it must be admitted that though the amount of the trade is satisfactory, averaging £16 or £17 per head of the population or about £80 to each household, a close inspection of the items reveals many regrettable features. Still the enormous expansion of the trade has certainly produced an improvement in the conditions of Irish life. The population has adopted a higher standard of living.

Bread, even though it be made from foreign corn, has displaced the potato as the staple food of Ireland. Yet the decline of tillage and the increase of cattle-rearing has been accompanied by a steady fall in the numbers of the people. The stream of emigration that the famine started, though it has somewhat slackened of recent years, has not ceased. The population now numbers only half that of 1841. Perhaps it is better to have four millions living as the people do now, than eight millions living on the verge of want.

Although under the conditions caused by the war, the home producer will probably have for many years the advantage of a restriction of external competition due to heavy freights and shortage of supplies, it will be no easy matter for him to contend with rivals of greater experience and possessed of greater capital. Success in industry, as in everything else, is only to be attained by thought and pains steadily applied year after year. Nor will it probably be of much avail to raise the cry "support home industry." If the home product is even nearly as good as the imported, it should, since it enjoys the advantage of proximity to the consumer, be able to hold its own in the home markets. If it is markedly inferior, not all the speeches and resolutions in the world will induce the generality of the people to purchase. It was not by such appeals that Messrs. Guinness, Harland and Wolff, Denny or Cleeve established their reputation or attained their present strong position. These were all once infant industries, but their founders saw opportunities of success and, beginning in a small way, worked up to great achieve-

ments. Other opportunities are here now; those who utilize them will in all likelihood win fortune for themselves and help to ameliorate the condition of their fellow-countrymen.

CHAPTER VII.

Finance and Currency

One of the most marked economic changes introduced into Ireland by the Norman invasion was the establishment of a monetary basis of daily life. The ancient Irish had managed most of their dealings by a system of barter, reckoning values in what was then the chief form of property, the cow. This is a customary stage in the development of nations. The Latin word for money (*pecunia*) is derived from *pecus*, showing that at one time in Italy cattle were the chief form of property and provided the standard of value, until their place was taken by coined metal. African natives still estimate value in terms of cows. Similarly in the early history of colonies on the American continent, tobacco, a universal product and leading article of export, has played the part of money. The ancient Irish chieftain collected his taxes by levying a forced hospitality or by a rent payable in cows. If he were defeated in war, the tribute which he paid to his conqueror usually took the same form. There are some signs, however, in the later period, of the use of the precious metals as a standard of value, rather in the shape of bars or nuggets, than as coined money. Certainly while internal trade might easily be conducted on a cow basis, external commerce, if it were to rise above mere barter, would require some standard more generally accepted by the nations of the

world. This would be furnished by gold and silver, which are very portable and possess a value in every country. Then later, as it became desirable that the medium of exchange should exhibit some guarantee, showing that it was of the proper weight and purity, the ruling authority would affix its stamp or would take the issue of currency entirely into its own hands. Thus coined money comes into existence. Its presence presupposes a commerce and traffic, which can only be conducted very slowly and clumsily in its absence.

The Danes, who, it will be remembered, became the traders and merchants of ancient Ireland, were the first to make extensive use of coinage. Their issues, many specimens of which are preserved in the Dublin museum, seem to have been close copies of those of contemporary Anglo-Saxon monarchs. The Danish system, however, only extended to their cities, dotted around the coast, none of which at any time enjoyed an extensive domination over the surrounding country. They can have had little more influence over the interior than the English traders on the Indian coast in the early days of the East India Company had on the life of the millions of inland dwellers who had never seen a white man. The Normans, however, penetrated far more deeply and carried a complete money system wherever they went. Their sheriffs exacted money fines from delinquents, the royal taxation was collected by assessments made in money, Customs charges were payable in money, a great financial department, the Exchequer, came into being, keeping its accounts in pounds, shillings, and pence. For the historian this change has the inestimable advantage of supplying a certain amount of data from

which the economic condition of the country may be judged. The evidence of the various account rolls begins to be of value towards the end of the thirteenth century, and thenceforwards there is a steadily increasing volume of light thrown on the subject.

The chief difficulty, which beset a mediæval state in its financial system, as in many other respects, was the lack of trustworthy officials. For this reason it was obliged either to come to terms with communities, or to enlist the services of individuals, whose power and authority would enable them to act effectively as deputies of the State in this respect. In dealing with towns they adopted the former policy. Cork or Dublin, for instance, was under obligation to pay a fixed sum called the *firma* (translated "farm" or "ferm") and was permitted to use its discretion as to the manner in which it was collected from individual citizens. The mayor and bailiffs appeared periodically at the exchequer in Dublin and delivered the sum due, receiving in return an acquittance for the amount paid. The collectors of royal taxes, such as the Customs, in each port were elected by the citizens. Thus the towns enjoyed a large share of financial freedom, and were not annoyed by the incursions of strangers coming to collect taxes. Even in the royal manor the reeve (*propositus*), who collected the rents and dues from the tenants and paid them to the King's representatives, seems to have been elected by the tenants, though he was also bound by an oath to serve the King faithfully in the execution of his office.

In the counties this system could not be adopted, for the unit of government was so much larger that in

the absence of local representative assemblies, election was out of the question. The alternative, then, was to select one of the chief magnates of the county to act as sheriff (or shire-reeve), that is to say, to discharge the same duties in the larger area of the county as the reeve in the manor. Though his duties are now concerned with the administration of the law, he was originally a financial, rather than an executive, officer. As the penalty most frequently inflicted by mediæval courts was a monetary fine, he was naturally entrusted with distress for non-payment of fine, or with arrest and custody of delinquents until their obligations were discharged. Furthermore, as he was the chief royal official in the county, he was the natural recipient of writs and mandates from the King or the royal courts of justice, affecting his district. Thus he would be warned to summon juries, to apprehend offenders and the like. The executive side of his functions thus grew, and, in later centuries, as a special tax-gathering organization developed, his financial powers fell into disuse. Finance is so important and its ramifications so extensive that the functions of a financial officer or department are readily extended to other departments. A parallel instance is the rise of a judicial body in the exchequer. A defaulting taxpayer would allege that he was unable to pay his taxes because another individual was refusing to pay the taxpayer his debts. The exchequer then proceeded against the third party, and so in the course of time came to be a court dealing with debts and other obligations affecting the relations of the subjects with each other.

The early financial system worked well enough as

regarded the towns and the manors. But, as regards the counties, it was objectionable as putting too much power into the hands of members of the feudal nobility. Even though the post was only temporary, its possession gave to the holder great power, which he was sometimes tempted to use for his own ends. It sometimes happened that a sheriff employed the forces of the Crown in battle with a private enemy, or threw harmless people into the dungeons of his castle with a view to extorting money for their release. However, on the whole, no great trouble arose during peace time. In war it was different. Money was required urgently and in large amounts. The authorities could not always wait until the slow processes of assembling a parliament and voting a subsidy had been gone through. They were obliged to have recourse to those, who had large sums to hand ready to lend. A predominantly agricultural country though it could furnish food to the troops, could not raise money at short notice. The towns were not yet wealthy enough to lend. In some countries it was necessary to apply to the Jews, hated and despised as they were, for money in a crisis. In Ireland, however, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the Italians were the great bankers. The Ricardi of Lucca and the Friscobaldi of Florence were formed into "companies of merchants" trading all over Ireland. Their multifarious connections enabled them to issue "letters of credit," which spared the traveller the risk and inconvenience of carrying large sums of money with him. Thus an ecclesiastic going to Rome could pay the Italian merchants in Dublin a sum of money and would receive in return a letter directed to one of their estab-

lishments in Italy ordering that he be credited with an equivalent amount on arrival. Their trading and banking business was very remunerative, and they were able to lend money to the Government, to religious bodies engaged in elaborate building schemes and to private individuals. Their services to the State seem to have been rewarded by the general favour extended to their operations, and by the appointment of some of their number to posts of honour and profit. Italians are to be found acting as sheriffs and as collectors of royal taxes, and it is significant that "Lombard" is to be found as a surname in the south of Ireland to this day.

However, all this structure began to totter under the stress of the fourteenth century following the Bruce invasion. Some of the sheriffs could not appear in court to render their accounts, others were not able to discharge their duties in the counties on account of the increasing disorder and confusion. The Italian merchants disappear from the records. Probably, with the usual sensitive timorousness of capital, they withdrew from the country when they saw no immediate prospect of settled government. The distress of the country is shown by a most unmistakable sign, one often repeated in later days, the debasement and depreciation of the currency. In times of trouble men tend to hoard good money and to circulate inferior kinds. Thus in modern days gold and silver, which will always have an intrinsic value, disappear and their place is taken by notes, which only maintain their value so long as the credit of the issuing body is unimpaired. The metallic currency goes into private hoards or is used by the Government to make its foreign payments. In the Middle Ages

paper money had not yet been invented, but kings in need of funds had recourse to the debasement of the coinage. If the silver shilling had contained, say, ten-pence worth of silver, they began to issue new coins of the same nominal value, but containing only sixpence worth of precious metal, and so on. Perhaps, if the war continued, later issues would be still further debased. If the soldier's wage was two shillings a week, it was a distinct and immediate advantage if he could be induced to accept two of the new coins, which had cost the Government so much less to produce than the old. On the other hand this gain was only momentary, for the government would eventually have to accept the base coins in payment of taxes, and would be no better off by the transaction. In the meantime much suffering would result. There would be a general desire to make all payments in the inferior money and to receive the better. The inevitable laws of supply and demand soon tell when there are two commodities available, of which everyone is anxious to obtain the one, and is equally anxious to get rid of the other. The good coin becomes scarce and goes to a premium, the inferior falls to a discount. Thus if there are progressive debasements, the currency may have varying values, according to the date of issue. Commerce is hampered in a thousand ways by this uncertainty in the value of money and the poor suffer most of all, because they are unable to discriminate between the different kinds of money, and readily fall victims to unscrupulous persons. Sometimes it has happened that the hard-pressed royal treasury has been unable to make any issue of coin, even of a debased kind. The result is an unendurable

scarcity of change, clogging every department of business. Even a bad currency is preferable to none at all. The vacant place is taken by the import of foreign coins, or by the issue of coins by bodies other than the State. This remedies the scarcity, but further increases the confusion.

All these phenomena may be amply illustrated from the economic history of Ireland. The Statute Book from Edward II.'s time is full of enactments relating to currency. At one time the use of base money called "pollards and crocards" is cried down,¹ at another the export of coinage is forbidden. Other enactments specify what foreign coinage is to be accepted and at what rates. One of the existing coins, the florin, was originally, as the name implies, a Florentine issue. Although the right of coinage was jealously guarded as a royal prerogative, yet the exercise of the right was so inconvenient to a distressed monarch that he was obliged to make a delegation of his power, and subordinate mints were set up at Waterford, Limerick, Galway, Trim, Drogheda and Carlingford. Besides these, the city of Cork, and the towns of Youghal, Kinsale and Kilmallock are found to have issued currency. In 1446 money called "O'Reillys," apparently issued by the independent Cavan chieftain of that name, was in circulation in the Pale.²

The earlier Tudors continued the evil practices of their predecessors, and not until the reign of Elizabeth was the coinage put upon a proper basis, and the nominal value made to approximate to the intrinsic worth. The coinage had meanwhile so depreciated that

¹ Simon, "Essay on Irish Coins," p. 15.

² *ibid.*, p. 20.

the proportion of silver in some issues was no more than one in four. Thus a shilling would only be worth three-pence in purchasing power. Elizabeth decreased the size of the coins, but restored their purity. Thus a pound weight of silver, which had originally been coined into twenty shillings, or a pound in money, was now coined into sixty shillings.

In the seventeenth century new forces commenced to operate. Taxation became a permanent measure, instead of a temporary assistance in time of stress. This change, which came later in Ireland than in England, produced important constitutional results in both countries. So long as the King had been able in peace time and with fair management, to meet the expense of government out of what was known as "the hereditary revenue," he was to that extent free from the necessity of asking parliament for supplies. Only war or extravagance need compel him to such a course. But, as the royal domain diminished in value owing to gifts to favourites and other causes, and as the scope of State activity developed, a stage was reached at which taxation became necessary to meet even peace expenditure. Parliaments had then to be frequently summoned, and if the King himself, or his ministers, or the policy which they proposed, were unpopular, soon set themselves in absolute opposition to his wishes. Thus came the great constitutional struggle of the seventeenth century in England, and the emancipation of the Irish Parliament in 1782.

The aim, therefore, of the King's ministers, when the experience of the Civil War had shown that resort to arbitrary repression was a dangerous expedient for the monarch, was to induce parliament to vote some lucra-

tive permanent tax, which should obviate the necessity of further applications for money. Strafford in his endeavours to develop and organize Ireland so that it should be a strong support for the royal power in the impending struggle, kept in mind the financial, as well as the military side of his policy, and endeavoured to found a salt monopoly for the royal profit.³ In the glow of loyalty after the Restoration, the King was endowed by parliament with very important additional revenues. In 1662—3 Acts were passed establishing the Excise, which was fixed at about one penny on the gallon of beer produced in Ireland, and fourpence on the gallon of spirits. A system of requiring licences from persons selling ale and beer was put into operation, and, as a fee was charged to each licensee, proved fairly remunerative. A third tax, which pressed hardly on the poor and was for that reason thoroughly detested, was instituted at the same time. This was the hearthmoney, a charge of two shillings for every fireplace in a house. It was payable yearly in one payment, and, if left unpaid, could be recovered by distressment.⁴ The effect of these enactments was to defer for a considerable period the dependence of the Irish Government on supplies voted by the parliament.

Soon after the Restoration the Irish revenue was "farmed out" to persons, who gave the King a lump sum for the privilege of collection, and reimbursed themselves from the difference between the amount of the "farm" and their total receipts. This was a very obnoxious system, since the "farmer" was under strong

³ Dr. G. O'Brien, "Economic History of Ireland in the Seventeenth Century," p. 244.

⁴ Howard, "Exchequer and Revenue of Ireland," I., 83—89.

temptation to extort more than the amount due, seeing his own pecuniary advantage in such conduct. The competition between rival "farmers" tended to force up the bids, until they reached or even passed the limits, at which a fair profit might have been attained without oppressing the taxpayer. Then the "farmer" who had overbid, must either use extortion or be a heavy loser. Sometimes they were driven into insolvency. This type of speculator has always been unpopular from the days of the "publican" so thoroughly abhorred by the Jews of the New Testament to those of the tithe-farmer of the early nineteenth century. In 1668 the revenue was farmed out for seven years at £219,500. But in 1678 this practice was abandoned, and a reversion was made to the older custom of collection of the revenue by royal officials. At the accession of King James II. in 1685 the revenue amounted to over £300,000 and was stated by Archbishop King to have been "sufficient to defray all the expenses of the Crown and to return yearly a considerable sum into England, to which this nation had formerly been a constant expense."⁵ Petty gives the total figure for that year as £318,073,⁶ made up of items approximately as follows:—

			£ (Irish)
Customs (inwards and outwards)	...	...	72,000
" Imported Excise "	...	...	47,000
Prisage	...	...	2,000
Beer Excise	...	...	79,000
Ale Licences	...	...	10,000
Miscellaneous (hearthmoney, quit-rents, &c.)			108,000

⁵ Dr. R. H. Murray, "Revolutionary Ireland and Its Settlement," p. 67.

⁶ "Economic Writings" (ed. Hull), II., 584.

The “imported excise” is not explained by Petty, but was probably an additional tax levied on excisable goods when imported, so as to put them on a level with similar commodities produced at home. English beer was, at this time, imported into Ireland, as it was stronger than the native ale. Porter was not yet brewed to any extent. “Prisage” was an ancient royal right to a perquisite of wine from every ship laden with that cargo, which touched at a port in the King’s dominions. It was often commuted for a money payment. The only tax bearing directly and heavily on the poorer class was the hearth-money, all others were paid in the first instance by the trading and agricultural interests, though, no doubt, both these sections passed the charge on to the general public by increasing the price of their produce. Still, if a man farmed for subsistence, as so many of the Irish poor then did, he need purchase very little, and could thus escape paying most of the taxes, either directly or indirectly. Petty remarks that the majority of Irishmen contributed nothing to the revenue, except when they purchased tobacco, the use of which had already become general.

Ireland soon recovered from the Williamite wars, and the revenue rose until in the year 1700 it reached over half-a-million pounds (Irish).⁷ This date synchronised with the coming into force of the prohibition of the export of Irish woollens. There was a consequent rapid decline in five years to £335,000 (Irish), due to a great falling off in the yield of Customs and Excise. As Ireland could not export so much as before, she could not import to the same extent, and the Customs both inward

⁷ As there were thirteen Irish pence to an English shilling, £1 (Irish) was equal to 18s. 6d. (English).

and outward suffered severely. The extensive smuggling, which took place, also involved a heavy loss to the revenue. Again, as there was less general prosperity, there was less demand for excisable goods, and their production diminished accordingly. Twenty-five years elapsed before Ireland adjusted herself to the altered economic system, and Customs and Excise reached the figure of 1700. Even so, Archbishop King states that the increase of Customs in the early part of the eighteenth century was due to heavy importations rather than to export, which was still at a low figure. A country which imports more than it exports unless, as in the case of the United Kingdom before the recent war, it has investments or other sources of income abroad and receives its dividends in the form of commodities, must inevitably be falling into debt. It was so with Ireland in the early eighteenth century.

The continental wars of William III. and Anne added to the difficulties of the situation since they involved Ireland as well as England in considerable military expenditure. There was a dismal series of deficits, and the national debt grew from a trifling sum to a serious burden. In 1715 it had been £16,000, or only about fourpence per head of the population. In 1731 it was twenty times that amount. Attempts were made to pay it off, but as soon as success was within sight, another war undid in a few years the painful economies of generations.

The chief item of expenditure was the military service. Though Ireland made no regular contribution to naval defence, she maintained a small standing army of some 10,000 men in peace time, and, in the event of war, often

raised and paid a force of double that number. The practice as regards the support of regiments on the Irish establishment when on foreign service, varied from time to time, but usually Ireland bore a part at least of this enhanced burden. The peace army would cost between £200,000 and £300,000 annually, and the charge for its maintenance would probably consume well over a third of the total revenue. In war the military expenditure would greatly exceed the total revenue and the debt would mount up enormously. However this burden, heavy as it was, was borne with a good grace. The Irish people seem never to have grudged money actually spent on the defence of the country.

A charge of a much more questionable character was that for pensions, which rose steadily throughout the eighteenth century and usually accounted for about one-sixteenth or a twelfth part of the total revenue. Only a mere fraction of the sum was for military pensions, the great bulk was expended in what were called "civil" pensions, many of which had had their origin in very dubious transactions. In fact there is reason to believe that the Hanoverian kings and their ministers, knowing that the Dublin Parliament had much less control of finance than the assembly at Westminster, deliberately foisted off some of their most scandalous protégés on the Irish Exchequer. King's mistresses appear on the list, also foreigners. A German military leader, Ferdinand of Brunswick, who commanded the allied forces at Minden, received more from Irish funds than all the veterans, soldiers' widows and orphans on the list combined. Undistinguished princesses and noblemen drew each from £1000 to £5000 annually.

The English Parliament would almost certainly have proved recalcitrant if it had been proposed to put persons of this type on the English pension list, and would probably have brought pressure to bear on the King by refusing supplies or in some other constitutional way, but in Ireland there was as yet no such power.

A further source of complaint was that many salaried offices were given to persons who reside out of the country, and indeed, in some cases, had never set foot in it. These men discharged their duties, if there were any attaching to their offices, by miserably-paid and therefore usually corrupt deputies. Thus the country was drained of money to provide for sinecurists. The absentee officials and the similar class of absentee landlords were frequently the object of adverse comment in the Irish Parliament, and repeated efforts were made to mulct them by taxation of some part of the large sums they were drawing from Ireland. In 1727 and 1769 Acts were passed imposing a tax of four shillings in the pound on absentee officials, but the earlier Act was evaded by means of a saving clause, which seems to have been specially designed for that purpose, while the second enactment, which was passed in the face of strong opposition in England, where the absentee was naturally a power was repealed within two years. In 1774 a tax of two shillings in the pound on the rents of absentee proprietors was imposed, and was dropped a few years later, only to be re-imposed after 1782 by the independent parliament.⁸ The yield from this tax varied greatly from year to year, which is in itself a sign of evasion. It is not altogether a desirable tax, from the

⁸ Dr. Alice Murray, "Commercial Relations between England and Ireland," p. 178,

revenue point of view, as it involves minute examination of a person's movements and habits, before his liability to pay the tax can be ascertained.

A characteristic illustration of the state of Ireland in the early eighteenth century is afforded by the celebrated agitation over Wood's half-pence. It has already been remarked that the Irish coinage had often been depreciated with consequent inconvenience and suffering to the whole country. Perhaps the worst debasement recorded in history is that effected by James II. during his brief stay in Ireland before the Battle of the Boyne. He was in desperate need of money to pay his troops and could not wait for the ordinary process of taxation, especially seeing that most of the wealthier people had fled to England and were beyond his reach, and the yield of any tax he might impose was not likely to be very great. In this emergency he coined money of the base metals, copper, brass, even tin and pewter, utilizing for his mint household utensils, broken bells, old guns and the like. The coins were ridiculously over-valued, fourpence worth of metal being made into five pounds' worth of money. The shopkeepers of Dublin were compelled to take these wretched counters in exchange for their wares, with the result that many of them were ruined, for apparently they were not permitted to raise their prices in order to allow for the debasement of the currency. When King William entered Dublin, one of his earliest acts was to issue a proclamation calling in the brass money. The incident left a deep impress on the public mind and before the recollection had well passed away, a somewhat similar situation occurred and led to remarkable results.

The lack of small copper currency was severely felt in Ireland in the early years of the eighteenth century. As wages were low, no more than a few pence daily, and prices were moderate, the need for very small change was more felt than it is now, when prices are so high that the farthing has long ceased to have any purchasing value, and the halfpenny may soon follow it. In order to supply small change, the English ministry in 1723 gave a patent to William Wood to coin £108,000 in half-pence and farthings for circulation in Ireland. The contract had been obtained by corrupt means and without consulting the Irish Parliament. By the terms of his patent Wood was permitted to coin a pound of copper (then worth a shilling) into 2s. 6d. worth of half-pence or farthings, so that, even keeping within this not very exacting standard, he might expect to make some £40,000 from the transaction. Much alarm and indignation was at once aroused in Ireland, which was enhanced by the appearance by the celebrated Drapier Letters, purporting to be written by a simple Dublin tradesman, but in reality the work of the formidable Dean Swift. Cleverly awakening the worst remembrances of 1690, he told his readers that twenty-four of these half-pence were worth no more than one good penny, that thirty-six would be required to buy a quart of ale, that a cartload would be needed by persons going shopping. In vain did Wood produce no less a person than Sir Isaac Newton as witness that the issue was not debased. Apart from the question of the merits or demerits of the issue, it seemed a monstrous thing that in a matter which so profoundly affected every person in Ireland, no notice whatever should have been taken

of Irish wishes, and that a speculator should be allowed to make a profit out of the inconvenience and loss of the Irish people. From denouncing specific instances of maladministration, such as Wood's patent and the appointment of sinecurist officials, Swift proceeded to arraign the whole system by which Ireland was liable at any moment to be overruled by ministers appointed by a distant assembly, which contained no Irish representatives. The English ministry gave way before the storm. Wood found it politic to return his patent, and the party in Ireland, which aimed at legislative independence, gained its first signal victory.

Lucas and Grattan followed where Swift and Molyneux had left. With the illustration before their eyes of the methods by which the English House of Commons had attained a dominating position in the State, they endeavoured to secure some measure of financial control. Unfortunately the royal revenue was secured *in perpetuum* and did not require an annual regrant, so that they had few opportunities of intervening in financial matters. So long as the Government lived within its means and was not obliged to come to parliament to ask for fresh taxation, the legislature, though it might criticise and censure, was practically powerless. Even if deficits occurred, they could be allowed to accumulate and become part of the National Debt. There had been attempts by a party in the Commons to assert the right of the legislature to dispose of any surplus remaining over after the expenses of the year had been paid, but this policy savoured somewhat of encroachment and was defeated with little difficulty. It must always be remembered that as a general rule, except in moments

of excitement and enthusiasm, corruption was as prevalent at College Green as at Westminster, and the ministry was usually able to obtain a working majority on set occasions. However, finding that they could not dispose of surpluses at will, the Commons adopted a policy of completely expending the revenues, so that there should be no disposable surplus, and hence the Crown might be more straitened for supplies and be forced to apply to Parliament. Grants for improvement of the country by means of road and canal construction, school-building, agricultural bounties, etc., were thus charged on the revenue. These amounted in the aggregate to large sums. In 1757 again the whole amount of the bounty on inland carriage of corn was thrown on the King's hereditary revenue.

By the outbreak of the American War the parliament had established itself in such a position that the ministry could, in peace time, only by careful management avoid an application to the legislature for funds, and, in case of war or other extraordinary expenditure, must face the parliament or stave off the immediate necessity by the ultimately ruinous expedient of allowing debt to accumulate. Of course the increase of debt would necessarily mean an increased annual charge for interest, which would be a further drain on the revenue and would render it more difficult to avoid deficits, even in peace time, for the future. Foreign war, therefore, paved the way for domestic emancipation. As has already been pointed out, the refusal to vote additional taxes for the American War, until the commercial restrictions had been removed, was probably as decisive a factor as the

armed menace of the Volunteers in determining the issue of the struggles of 1779 and 1782.

The chief financial measures of the independent parliament were the foundation of a State Bank in 1783 and the passing of a Responsibility Bill. The former project had often been mooted. Much suffering had been caused from time to time by the failure of private banks. The history of these had usually followed a well-marked course, the rise in popularity, the growth of deposits, perhaps the over-issue of notes, the sudden crash in time of stress with consequent loss of a great proportion of the people's savings, ruin, despair, suicide. It was thought that a State institution of the type of the Bank of England, supported by and in close relations with the Government, could at any rate guarantee to its depositors a certain security and permanence. The Bank of Ireland began its career by raising £600,000 by public subscription, no one person being allowed to contribute more than £10,000. This sum was lent to the Government at 4 per cent. and formed the original capital of the bank. The new institution was assured of its position by a provision in the Act of Foundation which forbade any combination of over six persons to take up or owe any sums on their bills within the limits of Ireland. Thus the bank had only individuals as rivals and need not fear the advent of a rival joint stock company.

The Responsibility Bill of 1793 brought the expenditure under parliamentary control. The hereditary revenue was to be voted annually. The King, that is to say, his ministers, could not dispose of the proceeds without giving account to parliament. The King was

given a fixed sum of money as a Civil List, and it was enacted that this grant was not to exceed £145,000. At the same time a Pensions Bill made provision that the Pension List should be reduced to £80,000, and that no single pension of over £12,000 a year should be granted except to a member of the Royal Family or on an address from both Houses of Parliament.

The total revenue, though it varied from year to year, showed throughout the eighteenth century a steady tendency to expand. In 1751 it reached over a million pounds (Irish currency). In 1792, the last peace year before the prolonged war of the French Revolution, it amounted to £1,687,000. In 1799, just before the Union, after six years of rising war taxation, it exceeded two millions and a half. By far the greater part of the revenue was raised, as it was in Petty's time and as it still is, through the Customs and the Excise. There was hardly any direct taxation, with the exception of the hated and oppressive hearthmoney, which produced £60,000 annually. The chief item of expenditure was that connected with the army and its forts and barracks. The civil establishment was more costly than it need be, especially in a small country, where the State as yet had very few duties to discharge. Pensions were a heavy burden. Still on the whole taxation was light and living was cheap.

The French Revolutionary War ushered in a period of severe financial embarrassment. At the very commencement of the struggle in 1793 Ireland added to her responsibilities by forming a militia for home defence. The force numbered some 20,000 men, and though it cost little in peace time, its support was a heavy charge,

when it was embodied in time of war or rebellion. Nor was this the only addition to the military forces. As the United Irish party was threatening armed insurrection and the intervention of the French, their opponents took to arms also, receiving Government encouragement and assistance, and in 1796 a kind of semi-military volunteer police, known as the Yeomanry, came into existence. Its strength was about 50,000 or 60,000 men, and, like the Militia, it could be put on a permanent footing. These two items alone greatly swelled the Irish expenditure, independently of such expenses as the support of the regular troops and the building of fortifications to guard against reiterated threats of invasion. Before the outbreak of this war the debt had been about two millions, that is to say, only the amount of a year and a half's revenue, or, to look at it from another point of view, well under one pound per head of the population. But between 1793 and 1800 war and rebellion caused a series of deficits, which swelled the debt from two to twenty-eight millions sterling. As the rate of interest was high, ranging from 5 to 7 per cent., the payments on this head alone were crippling, amounting to two millions sterling. In some quarters the Union was supported as an escape from national bankruptcy. Certainly if the Union had not taken place, even though domestic and internal peace had immediately supervened, Ireland could only have escaped insolvency by submitting to taxation on a scale twice as great as that hitherto in force. The charges for interest on the debt would amount to as much as a whole year's revenue before the outbreak of the French War. Therefore, to be solvent and meet all her obligations, she must double

her revenue. If war and internal commotion still continued, the debt would reach such proportions that only by imposing a terrible burden of taxation could the country even pay interest on its borrowings. Sooner or later the breaking-point would be reached. This was perhaps the strongest argument in the mouths of the advocates of the Union. They predicted disaster for Ireland if she continued to stand alone. In union with Great Britain, and able to avail herself of the credit of a richer country, she might come through all her difficulties.

The financial terms offered by Castlereagh were probably intended to be fair. He entered into an elaborate calculation of the consumption of dutiable commodities in each country and the value of their imports and exports. His conclusion was that Ireland, while paying all her home expenditure, might be asked to bear two-seventeenths of the total expenditure of the United Kingdom, and that the British and Irish debts should not be united until such time as the Irish debt reached two-seventeenths of the whole amount owed by the United Kingdom. Thus Ireland still had a separate exchequer. If her revenue after paying for home expenditure failed to reach two-seventeenths of the total expenditure of the United Kingdom, the amount of the deficiency was automatically added to the Irish debt. Castlereagh's data were questioned at the time, and Foster and Sir J. Parnell, both ex-Chancellors of the Irish Exchequer, declared that one-tenth would have been a fairer proportion. Neither Unionists nor anti-Unionists seemed to foresee what actually took place. All calculations were based on the tacit assumption that

peace would soon be restored. Either Castlereagh's figure or Foster's might have been satisfactory in peace time. But the difference between them is so slight that in the end it would have mattered little which of them had been adopted. The war continued for fourteen years after the Union. The United Kingdom was fighting for its life on land and sea, it was sending out expeditions to every quarter of the world, and forming and subsidising continental coalitions against Napoleon.

Expenditure accordingly was colossal. In 1808, for instance, two-seventeenths of British expenditure amounted to five million and a half pounds.⁹ One-tenth would have been about £4,800,000. Either figure was substantially in excess of the total revenue raised in Ireland, even without allowing any deduction for Irish expenditure. The debt therefore rapidly increased. By 1817 it had reached £112,000,000 and had attained that proportion to the British debt, which had been fixed as a preliminary to the amalgamation of the whole indebtedness into one charge. The exchequers were accordingly united, and the whole financial system was centralized in London. Ireland ceased to be a separate entity. Her accounts, both of revenue and expenditure, were merged in those of the United Kingdom, and with the lapse of time it has become a matter of considerable difficulty to state accurately how much of either incomings or outgoings is to be attributed to Ireland.

The great French War, like its predecessors, had produced a number of ingenious financial devices for raising money. State lotteries were conducted on a large scale, but were found to involve so much general

⁹ D. A. Chart, "Ireland from the Union to Catholic Emancipation," p. 67.

demoralization of the people that they were abandoned. £100,000 or £200,000 for State funds was dearly bought at the expense of a gambling frenzy during the time of drawing, a crop of suicides of the disappointed, an unsettlement from honest industry, and the encouragement of the private lottery shark, who could hardly be punished for trying to fill his own pocket by methods modelled on those by which the Government was seeking to replenish the national exchequer. Tontines, a curious blend of lottery and life insurance, were also established from time to time. A Tontine was a sort of club whose members lent money to the Government on condition of receiving an annuity until the date of the lenders' death, with the proviso that as each member died, the annuities of the survivors should be proportionately increased. When all had died, the tontine ended. War, too, had all its usual effects on the currency.

The mint seems to have been starved, probably because the precious metals were required for subsidies to foreign countries, for soldiers' pay, or for the expenses of persons emigrating. Gold and silver disappeared from the circulation, their places being taken by a prodigious issue of paper money, often issued by firms of no great standing. It was estimated that over £6,000,000 in notes were usually in circulation. Of the total from one-third to one-half was Bank of Ireland notes, which, being issued by a well-known institution supported by the Government, were in better repute than the issues of smaller banks. There were about forty private banks, mostly situated in the country, issuing notes, generally for local circulation. The value of this currency rose and fell with the credit of the issuer. Periodically some

of these banks failed and their notes became so much waste paper, greatly to the loss of those persons who were unfortunate enough to be possessors of any quantity of this discredited currency. Besides the larger denominations, "silver notes" for small sums were issued by various banks, and at one time the small change of the country was for the most part paper of a heterogeneous character, easily forged and lending itself to all kinds of knavery. The same causes, which were draining away the gold, were also taking effect on the silver. Beside silver notes a large amount of base money was in circulation, well known to be counterfeit, but universally accepted for the sake of convenience, in default of better money. In 1804 an attempt was made to rectify the situation. Banks were forbidden to issue notes for sums under £1. The counterfeit silver was "cried down" by public proclamation. To fill up the gap thus left, the Bank of Ireland obtained a number of silver Spanish dollars, value about four shillings, which they re-stamped with the legend "Bank of Ireland Token : Six Shillings" and circulated at that value. A similar plan was adopted with the tenpenny and fourpenny pieces. But, although the silver tokens were not worth nearly the factitious price put upon them, they contained enough silver to be worth hoarding and exporting, and by 1811 they too had begun to be scarce in many parts of Ireland, and silver notes reappeared. The copper coinage, too, gradually vanished, and its place was taken by tokens of many kinds, issued by municipalities or by leading employers, such as manufacturers or owners of large estates. It may be remarked that similar circumstances in Germany during the recent

war, when copper and brass were required for munitions, led to the issue of token currencies of this kind by the chief municipalities. Such issues have, as a rule, only a local circulation. In 1805 and 1806 the copper coinage was replenished by a new supply furnished under contract with the Government. The silver was not put on a satisfactory basis until after the close of the war. The Irish coinage was assimilated to the British, thus avoiding the loss consequent on changing from the money of one system to the other. The sovereign took the place of the guinea as the chief gold coin. In 1822 and 1823 the last distinctively Irish coins made their appearance. These were pence and half-pence, bearing on the reverse the Irish harp instead of the figure of Britannia.

The period immediately following the war saw an important change in the system of Irish banking. As most of the small banks were ruined, and no joint-stock company was permitted to operate in Ireland, the Bank of Ireland enjoyed a lucrative monopoly, which aroused a considerable amount of jealousy. There was no competition in the better-class banking business. As the joint-stock principle had proved successful in other spheres, there was an anxiety that it should be applied to Irish banking. The first inroad on the privileged position of the State Bank was made in 1821 by an Act which permitted joint-stock banks to operate in Ireland, provided that they did not approach nearer than fifty Irish miles to the capital. Under this Act banking companies were established in Ulster, such as the Northern Banking Company (1825), the Belfast Banking Company (1827), and the Ulster Bank (1836).

Companies with head offices in England such as the Provincial Bank (1824) came to extend their business to Ireland, even straining the terms of the Act by setting up offices in Dublin. Other banks, which were founded at this period were the Hibernian (1825), the National, with Daniel O'Connell as its first governor (1835), and the Royal (1836). In 1845 an Act was passed depriving the Bank of Ireland of its fifty-mile concession, and note-issuing joint-stock banks were subject to no local restriction.¹⁰ The Bank of Ireland, though the bank of the State, has now to compete with many rivals for the custom of the general public.

The financial history of Ireland since the Union has been on the whole uneventful. During the first half of the century any special privileges in regard to taxation, which Ireland had enjoyed at the time of the Union, were allowed to remain to her under the new regime. Although the war expenses caused a heavy deficit, it was not met by increased taxation, but was allowed to accumulate as a debt. Possibly this policy was deliberately pursued in order to increase Irish indebtedness and accelerate the amalgamation of the Exchequers. There was an obvious advantage in having but one great financial department for the United Kingdom. On the other hand this assimilating policy probably went too far. The circumstances of Great Britain are frequently quite different from those of Ireland, and there is no particular advantage, but rather the reverse, in treating them as if they were the same. Probably in any case, the stress of over twenty years' war, the longest period of hostilities that had occurred

¹⁰ M. Dillon, "History and Development of Banking in Ireland," pp. 52-99.

for centuries, would have brought Ireland to the door, if not over the threshold of bankruptcy, and certainly this danger was averted by the Union, though at the cost of a loss of financial independence. On the other hand, if the Union had not been followed by the amalgamation of the Exchequers, the Irish Government might have enjoyed a certain freedom in allocating funds for Irish purposes. As it is, every application involving expenditure has to be referred to the Treasury in London, which, though usually honest and well-intentioned, seldom exhibits that accurate knowledge of Irish needs, which would enable it to come to a speedy and correct decision. An Irish financial officer would be more immediately accessible and less difficult to persuade. It must be admitted, however, that under Treasury control that great mass of corruption and abuses, which was eating into the heart of Irish administration in the eighteenth century has been cut away, as by a surgeon's knife, and the body politic is all the better for the operation. Improper pensions and sinecure offices, so often criticized and opposed by Grattan and others to little purpose, had almost disappeared from the national accounts by 1830. The little finger of the Treasury had proved thicker than the loins of the Irish Parliament.

On the whole during the war period following the Union, Ireland was treated with consideration in financial matters.¹¹ The increases in taxation were mainly laid on luxuries, such as spirits, tobacco and tea. Even on these commodities Ireland was subject to a lighter impost than Great Britain, while she was

¹¹ Dr. Alice Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 375.

exempted altogether from a number of duties levied in Great Britain, such, for instance, as the Excise charges on bricks, candles, salt, etc. Furthermore, she was exempt from various forms of British direct taxation, notably the income tax, which at one time stood at 2s. in the pound in Great Britain. Since the amalgamation of the Exchequers there has been a steady process of assimilation between the countries, which is now almost complete, the only exceptions being in a few trifling instances, such as dog licences, duty on menservants, and the like. The rates on tea and tobacco were equalized in 1817 and 1819 respectively, but the stamp duties were not assimilated until 1842, and not until 1853 were the last privileges of Ireland threatened, the enjoyment of a lower spirit duty and a complete exemption from income tax. In that year Gladstone extended the income tax to Ireland, justifying himself on the ground that the tax would fall solely on the well-to-do and would therefore not aggravate in any way the sufferings of the numerous Irish poor. As a compensation for this new burden, he wrote off a debt of two millions incurred in assisting the overweighted poor-law unions to cope with the famine. The tax yielded in the first year £460,000, and has since, even in times of peace, amounted to a million sterling annually, or about one-eleventh of the total revenue, so that it will be seen that the Gladstonian compensation was somewhat inadequate. In the same year Gladstone initiated a policy, pursued by his successor, of assimilating the Irish rate of taxation of spirits to that in force in Great Britain. This was carried off by a jocose remark that it was not "one of the rights of man that an Irishman

should be able to get intoxicated more cheaply than an Englishman." By 1858 the duties were equal in both countries. This removed the last notable fiscal inequality between Great Britain and Ireland. Probably this result was inevitable, for under a unitary and centralized system local differences of taxation are felt as an anomaly and resented as a grievance by the less favoured parts. The English or Scotch spirit-drinker, for instance, would consider it a hardship that, owing to such causes, his favourite beverage should cost him more than it cost the Irishman. Similarly with the middle-class payer of income tax. Financial ministers will be sensitive to complaints of this sort, and, when in need of revenue, will be tempted to turn to those quarters where complete or partial exemption still prevails. The only plea to be put forward against them is that of national poverty, and, unless they are taxing the necessities of life, they may counter, as Gladstone did in the case of the income tax, by pointing out that the tax will fall on the rich, not on the poor.

It should be pointed out, however, before parting with the subject, that the whole trend of British fiscal policy after the Great French War, while beneficial to Great Britain, was much less so to Ireland. The remission of excise and export duties on manufactured goods gave little relief to Ireland, which, except in the north, had few industries, while the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 and the subsequent removal of import duties on foreign foodstuffs were a discouragement to the agricultural interest, which was important, no doubt, in Great Britain, but was not the national mainstay, whereas in Ireland it was the sole support of nine-tenths of the

people. Peel opened the ports to admit corn to stave off famine in Ireland, but the policy of keeping those ports open after the famine had passed has led to a discouragement of home tillage and a dangerous dependence on the foreigner for daily bread. The severe agricultural depression of the 'seventies due to foreign competition led to the land agitation of the 'eighties. Still cheap food has been an advantage to the Irish poor and has lifted them from dependence on the potato. But the days of cheap food and unlimited imports are certainly over for the present and may never recur again.

The only Irish fiscal question, which has been raised in recent years, relates to what is known as the "Financial Relations" between Great Britain and Ireland. In 1894 a Commission of Inquiry was appointed to investigate the relative taxable capacities of Great Britain and Ireland, and the amount of contribution to imperial expenses which might fairly be expected from the latter country, in a word, to decide under modern conditions the question settled by Castlereagh in the financial provisions of the Act of Union. The commission made various tests, such, for instance, as a comparison of assessments to income tax, of payments of death duties, and a majority came finally to the conclusion that the relative taxable capacity of Ireland was to that of Great Britain as one to twenty. But while this ratio was fairly observed in the direct taxation, in the indirect forms Ireland's contribution was as one to nine, and therefore to that extent she laboured under a financial grievance. This disproportionate yield of indirect taxation is mainly attributable to the very large produce of

excise in Ireland, caused by the extensive (though steadily decreasing) consumption of whiskey. As spirits are liable to a much heavier excise than beer, the excise in England did not bear so large a proportion to the total revenue. Tea and tobacco, both liable to Customs duties, were consumed in relatively larger quantities in Ireland than in Great Britain, and accordingly the Customs were swollen, though not to such an extent as the Excise. This preponderance of indirect taxation was a national, but not an individual hardship. The general public, in fact, hardly understood the issue, and there was no great force behind the agitation for redress. Chancellors of the Exchequer, when approached on the subject, were inclined to answer with a bantering reference to the national predilection for whiskey, which swelled the indirect taxation, or if compelled to answer more seriously, pointed out that, generally speaking, taxes were equal throughout the United Kingdom and that, if anything, Ireland was favoured by exemption from certain taxes, that if persons chose to consume heavily-taxed commodities, that was their own affair and the State could not be expected to be perpetually changing its system to suit variations in popular taste from time to time and from place to place. The non-smoking teetotaller, for instance, probably paid on an average only half as much to imperial funds as the smoker and drinker did, but no financier would think of trying to adjust matters between the teetotaller and the drinker by taxing currant buns or sodawater. Such a process would lead to endless inquiries and continual changes in taxation, which would be worse evils than the maintenance of the existing system, to which, after all, every-

one had become reconciled by long usage. A further point as against the Commission's finding was that, the two countries having been closely associated for so long, it was now very difficult to distinguish Irish revenue and expenditure from those of Great Britain and the statistics on the subject were accordingly suspect. The passive resistance of the Chancellors triumphed, and nothing was done.

Since that time, however, direct taxation, as the result of an excess profits tax and enhanced income tax, which are much more productive across the channel than in Ireland, has increased enormously in Great Britain, so that it is likely that the relations of the countries in the matter of taxation have materially changed since 1894. Until the disturbing influence of the recent war has passed away, no satisfactory conclusion can be drawn from statistics. Between 31st March, 1914, and 31st March, 1918, the revenue collected in Ireland has increased from £12,944,000 to £21,646,000, an increase of nearly nine millions. This increase is almost all accounted for by a great rise in income tax receipts, which have expanded from £1,161,000 to £9,833,000 during the same period. About half of the latter figure is not income tax properly so called, but the excess profits duty received from firms or individuals who have been drawing an enormous profit from the artificial war conditions, and who neither expect nor are likely to receive much sympathy, if closely shorn by the tax-gatherer.

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