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1.—*Ireland Since the Famine.—A Sketch of Fifty Years' Economic and Legislative Changes.*

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[Read Friday, November 21st, 1902.]

IN addressing you this evening I propose to review, as shortly as the subject will admit, the economic and legislative changes that have taken place in Ireland during the last half-century—to take stock of our position as a commercial house takes periodical stock of its goods, an operation useful and instructive, because it helps to an understanding of the present, the first step towards further progress. That much has been done to improve the condition of the country and of its people during the last half century will be admitted by most persons, although many may differ as regards the means employed and the results achieved. My object in making this survey is not to prove that the economic and social condition of Ireland is as satisfactory as possible, that the existing order of things is all that can be desired, and that no change for the better is possible. The great principles of evolution and development are now too well recognised as governing all life—social, economic and political—to permit of such a standpoint being maintained. Society is based on continuous movement and change. Things cannot stay as they are. Even if we arrive at the best possible arrangements for the government and management of our affairs, the force of circumstances, movements over which we can have no control, changed conditions which no one could have contemplated or foreseen, will inevitably compel us to adopt new methods, and

oblige us to reform systems that may at one time have been the most satisfactory that the wit of man could have devised. The statesman is the politician who looks beyond the present, who seeks to secure, not alone an immediate advantage but a future good, whose vision is not bounded by the limitations of party success, but is also directed afar to the great issues on which the welfare of the country depends, whose attention is not confined, like Bunyan's man with the muck-rake, to the things that he can gather at his feet, desirable though they may be, but is turned also to the celestial crown above him. He accordingly can seldom adopt the position that things are at their best, in this best of all possible worlds. He sees that the ebb and flow of human affairs demand constant attention, and require frequent changes in method and policy. But to forecast the future, we must understand the present. Social philosophers assure us that the Present is only important because it is the factory in which the Future is being manufactured. Even if we accept for it a position so humble, we are obliged to study its symptoms and master its resources if we are to have any influence in the shaping of the product it is to turn out.

We can best understand the Ireland of to-day by comparing it with the Ireland of yesterday; by measuring the present state of things by that which has passed away. We can thus judge of the social and economic problems that have to be faced and the difficulties that have to be overcome. No more suitable date for purposes of comparison can be taken than the Famine in the middle of the last century. That was the turning point in Irish economic history. The old order of things then gave way before the combined influence of the potato failure and the introduction of Free Trade in England. The effect of these forces was immediate. An enormous emigration commenced, and pasture took the place of agriculture over a great part of the country. New conditions were thus created, and new problems had to be faced. One result of this changed order of things was that men's minds were set thinking. The miseries and misfortunes of the country that had been evident for generations, we may say centuries, now attracted the attention of social and economic as well as of political reformers. The foundation of the Dublin Statistical Society (as our society was first named) in 1847, under the presidency of Archbishop Whately, was a symptom of the growing interest in economic problems. Among its founders were Professor Montiford Longfield, afterwards judge of the Landed Estates Court; Sir Thomas Larcom, afterwards Under-secretary to the Lord Lieutenant; Sir Robert Kane, Sir William Wilde, Jonathan Pim, Isaac Butt, James

A. (afterwards Mr. Justice) Lawson, Professor Neilson Hancock, Dr. J. K. Ingram, and Sir Thomas Moffett, who are both happily still on the list of our Vice-Presidents.

The first paper read before the Society was on the connexion between Statistics and Political Economy by Mr. (afterwards Judge) Lawson. This was followed by papers on the "Economic Resources of Ireland," on the "Changes in the Nature and Locality of Textile Manufactures consequent on the Application of Steam to their Production," on the "Condition of the Irish Labourer," on "Emigration," and on a "Notice of the Theory, that there is no hope for a Nation that lives on Potatoes." At the close of the session an address was delivered by the president, Archbishop Whately, on "the Necessity for the Cultivation and Diffusion of the Science of Political Economy in Ireland." "Next to sound religion," said his Grace, "sound Political Economy was most essential to the well-being of society. For the world must be governed, has been governed, and will be governed by Political Economists, though many of them were very bad ones."

The movement then started by the founders of the Statistical Society continued all through the century. Men's minds were ever turned to the examination of economic and social questions. All manner of theories were preached, and doctrines propounded for the amelioration of the condition of the people. It was universally recognised that the country was not prosperous, and that the condition of the people was miserable. Some ascribed this state of things to the inertia and ignorance of the inhabitants. Others, including the writer of Lord Devon's Digest, to the use of the potato. A third class rested it on the perverse character of the people, in this following Bishop Berkeley, who attributed this disposition to the Tartars and Spaniards from whom he believed Irishmen were descended; while others again thought that the condition of the people was due to the state of the laws.

The half-century between the Famine and the present day was not barren in legal enactments. It soon became evident that the policy of "let alone" could not be maintained, and after a long period of controversy, strife, and agitation several Acts were put on the statute book that well-nigh revolutionized the organization of Irish life. The Ireland of 1850—and I take that date as representing the state of the country at the close of the Famine period—was very different from the Ireland of 1900. In 1845 the population was nearly double what it is now. Local or county government was in the hands of a few of the better off inhabitants, who were selected by arbitrary as opposed to representative methods. The Land Laws recognized

no rights of ownership in the occupier beyond what his agreement with the landlord gave to him, and the social condition of the people was wretched in the extreme.\*

Perhaps the first really important social measure that was passed after the union between the Parliaments of Great Britain and Ireland was the Poor Law Act of 1837, which established and created the Poor Law Union System that has been so large a factor in Irish life. About the same time became law the Grand Jury Act of 1837, which regulated the local government of the Irish counties, and a few years later, the Municipal Corporations Act of 1840, which provided for the Local Government of the larger cities—the Towns Improvement Act of 1854 doing the same for the smaller towns. During the first half of the 19th century, with the exception of some subletting Acts, there was little legislation of any importance dealing with Irish land.

#### *The Movement of Population During the Half-Century.*

The emigration from Ireland that commenced with the Famine, affected that part of the country that was suitable for grazing far more than the poorer and lighter lands that required to be tilled in order to make them productive. The explanation is simple. The adoption of the policy of Free Trade in England, and the repeal of the Corn Laws, opened up English markets to the commerce of the world. Grain could be brought in from all countries, and the practical monopoly that formerly protected the agriculturists of the British Isles came to an end. The policy of Free Trade was introduced just as steam transport began to develop. Wheat-growing and its subsidiary industries became unprofitable in Great Britain and Ireland. The change did not vitally affect England or Scotland, as the rural inhabitants of these countries were able to get employment in the great industrial centres that the new Free Trade policy fostered and developed. In Ireland it was different. There were, practically speaking, no industries to give work to the unemployed people. The landowners were thoroughly alarmed by their experiences of the Famine years. They found that the system of letting the land by competition to a tenantry living on the margin of subsistence, with the lowest possible standard of comfort, meant total loss if lean years came, when the owners not

\* Sir Robert Kane, in his "Industrial Resources of Ireland," published in 1844, dealing with charges that used to be made against the character of the people by some superior critics, wrote:—"We were reckless, ignorant, improvident, drunken, and idle. We were idle, for we had nothing to do; we were reckless, for we had no hope; we were ignorant, for learning was denied us; we were improvident, for we had no future; we were drunken, for we sought to forget our misery."

alone failed to recover their rents, but became liable for the payment of an enormous poor rate. Those of them who weathered the storm, and the successors of those who went under, began to look around for a new method of dealing with the land. They found that the old tillage system had ceased to pay—foreign competition had killed it. A new industry, however, appeared above the horizon, fostered by the changed conditions that prevailed in Great Britain. Corn could be brought from across the seas in quantities, and with an economy that made home competition impossible. But with meat it was different. The existing means of transport, improved though they had been, did not permit of cattle being brought into England—in fact, there was no country from which they could be sent so as to compete with those reared in Ireland. Large districts in Leinster, Munster and Connaught were admirably suited for the production of live stock. Emigration was accordingly encouraged, and the exodus began that has lasted to the present day. For although the conditions that started Emigration may have been modified, the habit continued. The enormous industrial development that began in the United States gave unlimited employment to the Irish immigrants, whose numbers never appeared to over-crowd the labour market.

The question has been constantly discussed, whether the great decrease in the number of the people in Ireland has been a benefit or a disaster. It does not require much consideration to see that there is a point at which the population of a country must, as regards numbers, economically speaking, come to an equilibrium. This point depends on a variety of circumstances—on the industrial character of the country, on the nature of the soil, on its geographical situation, and so on. Devonshire, with 175 persons to the square mile, may be as densely populated as Lancashire with 1,000, having regard to their relative capacities. So Belgium with 580 persons to the square mile may not be over-populated, while China with 292 to the same space, may have a larger population than she can decently or economically support. On the other hand, it is certain that Canada, with less than two persons to the square mile, is much under-populated. What, then, is the test of what is a sufficient population? That, I would venture to suggest, is to be determined by the standard of living of the people.

A little consideration will convince us that a country is not over-populated if, under free economic conditions, its natural resources are capable of maintaining the number of people in it at a fair average standard of comfort. It need hardly be pointed out that much depends on the manner in which the natural resources are developed. Measured

in this way, there may have been an excessive population in Ireland in 1844, while the population at the present day may be much less than the country is capable of supporting in comfort. A test adopted by many is to divide the total estimated wealth of the country by the number of its inhabitants, and thus show the average amount possessed by each. Of course the smaller the number of people, the greater will be the average wealth, and if such a test of prosperity be accepted, every diminution in the number of the people will show an increase in their wealth per head. This argument, by a *reductio ad absurdum*, will bring prosperity to a country by the obliteration of its people, as the fewer they are in number, the greater will be their average wealth. Teeming millions, such as are found in some Asiatic countries, with a low standard of living, are no proof of prosperity. The population of a country, as I have said, may, economically speaking, be considered at an equilibrium when it has reached the maximum number that, having regard to natural resources, will allow to each person a proper standard of living, that will give to everyone who can work, good food, clothing and housing, and a reasonable amount of leisure and enjoyment of life.\* The supreme ideal is not that every rood of ground should maintain its man. Should that day ever come the desirability of the world as a place of residence will unquestionably diminish. If the entire land surface of the earth were rich alluvial soil, humanity, as a whole, would lose much. What does it profit a man to gain the whole world if he lose his own soul? The accumulation of wealth is not the supreme good, or the only object that a country, any more than an individual, should seek after. A healthy life and good social conditions are the most important elements in the well-being of a people. They furnish the best test of whether the country is in a satisfactory condition or the reverse.

### *The Increase of Lunacy.*

The increase of lunacy in Ireland during the last half-century is a matter of serious import, and merits careful inquiry. The number of lunatics (including idiots) in Ireland in 1901 was four times as great as in 1851, although the people have decreased by more than one-third. As the population diminished the proportion of

\* For a discussion on the importance of leisure for the well-being of a community, and its intellectual development, see Bagehot's *Physics and Politics*, 71-73; and Aristotle, *Metaphysics*.

lunatics rapidly increased. In 1851 the ratio was one lunatic to every 657 persons, in 1871 it was one to every 328, in 1891 one to every 222, and in 1901 one to every 178 persons. The total number of idiots and lunatics in the last year reached over 25,000. Various explanations have been given for this increase. Some say that it is due to the food of the people, the use of too much tea and strong spirits. Others ascribe it to political unrest, but was there ever a period in history in which the country was without that exciting cause? Others again allege that it is mainly due to emigration, which drains away the stronger and better elements of the population, and leaves behind the dregs and the incapables. I think, in addition, it may be largely ascribed to the loneliness of the lives and the want of mental employment of the people over large districts of the country. These conditions did not exist to the same extent in the pre-famine days, when the people were numerous and their occupations and methods of living less solitary. When we examine the district in Ireland in which lunacy is now most common, we find that the pasture counties have a far larger number than the tillage. Meath, King's County, Kilkenny, Carlow, Wexford, Waterford, Tipperary and Clare have the highest ratio of lunatics, while Antrim, Londonderry, Down and Dublin have the lowest. Even in Mayo and Donegal, where the population is largely congested, but where simple pasturage is not the prevailing occupation—and where the migration of labour is common—the proportion of lunatics is far below the average for Ireland. Districts which include large towns have a much lower ratio than those which are purely rural. It must, I think, be admitted that the alarming increase in lunacy is partly due to the decrease in the population of large districts of Ireland, which has reduced the number of the people below what is necessary for a healthy social life, and also to the nature of the people's occupation, which does not sufficiently interest and employ intellects naturally quick and easily affected.

#### *The Tendency of Irish Agriculture.*

The change in the size of Irish farms within the last sixty years has been very remarkable. In 1841 holdings between one and fifteen acres comprised over 81 per cent. of all the farms above one acre in the country. Ten years later holdings of this size were only 49 per cent. of the total, while in 1901 they were further reduced to 42 per cent. Farms between 15 acres and 30 acres were 11.5 per cent. of the total of agricultural holdings above one acre in

1841; they were 25 per cent. in 1851, and 26 per cent. in 1901. Farms of over 30 acres were only 7 per cent. of the total in 1841. They rose to 26 per cent. in 1851, and to 32 per cent. in 1901. The increase in the size of the holdings is, of course, synonymous with the change from tillage to pasture. And we may assume that it would have been still greater, but that much of the land—in Ulster especially—could be best made productive by being kept in cultivation. In France, where tillage is very largely practised, the average size of the farms is about 22 acres, while upwards of 85 per cent. of the farms in the country are under 25 acres. Belgium, the area of which is about one-third that of Ireland—11,373 square miles to 32,531—and with a population of over six and a half millions, in 1895 possessed 829,625 farms of an average size of about eight acres.\*

The economic revolution that took place in Ireland after the Famine is shown by the relative movements in the number of the people and of the live stock. Between 1851 and 1901 the number of persons on each 1,000 acres of land diminished by over 30 per cent., while the number of cattle increased by over 60 per cent., and sheep and swine increased over 110 per cent. and 15 per cent. respectively. The number of milch cows during the half-century has declined in actual numbers from 1,517,672 in 1854 to 1,482,483 in 1901, while the proportion they represent of the total cattle in the country has fallen from 43 per cent. to 32 per cent. As the total number of horned cattle in Ireland in 1901 was 4,673,323, it is evident that the rearing of stores and fattening constitute the most considerable part of the cattle industry. A very large proportion of the cattle exported to Great Britain are stores. In 1901 the numbers were 261,690 fat cattle to 344,954 stores. This export trade in stores enables English and Scotch farmers to devote their land to the production of food for fattening the cattle brought from Ireland. At the same time this trade in young stock is a considerable drain on Irish land, taking much out of the soil without any corresponding return. Ireland at present occupies a position of great advantage in having almost a monopoly in the

\* See the Statistical Survey of Irish Agriculture in the admirable work on—“*Ireland: Industrial and Agricultural*,” published by the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland, and edited by Mr. W. P. Coyne. It must be remembered that Belgium and a great part of France are devoted to small farming, carried on under the pressure of a strong competition and land hunger, and with, as a rule, a low standard of comfort. The competition for farms is very great. A professor in Louvain University related to me an instance in his own experience where the occupier of a holding happened to get a cold, and immediately over 30 of his neighbours took the first train to the town in which the landowner lived to put in applications for the farm.



supplying of store cattle to the English and Scotch farmers, but the position is one of considerable danger. Should the restrictions on the import of live stock from Canada and the Argentine Republic be removed, as doubtless they would be, were it shown that the introduction of disease was no longer to be feared, a serious blow would be struck at the prosperity of the Irish cattle industry, and new economic conditions would have to be faced. Such a consideration would point to the desirability of resting the agricultural industry of the country on a wider and sounder basis than the mere breeding of cattle. It shows the absolute necessity for advisory and fostering bodies such as the Department for Agriculture and the Congested Districts Board, which help to develop and encourage a variety of suitable industries, and so prevent the people from keeping too many of their eggs in one basket, an error frequently disastrous to nations as well as to individuals. It must also be remembered that often a larger return, both in the number and value of the animals, can be obtained from stock rearing in conjunction with tillage, than by a sole dependence on natural pasture. Scotch and English farmers have proved this, and it is one of the great advantages claimed for a system of mixed farming in other countries. Mr. Coyne notes that while the area under meadow and pasture in Ireland is over eleven times the similar area in Belgium, the number of our cattle is only three times greater. This remarkable difference is explained by the small farming system carried on in Belgium, which enables a much larger number of cattle to be raised per acre, under a system of tillage and house-feeding, than is possible by field grazing alone.

*Legislative Efforts to Improve Local Government and  
Agrarian Conditions.*

The principal subjects that will occupy the attention of anyone who wishes to study the Economic and Social history of Ireland for the last half-century, are Local Government, the Land Laws, and the industrial progress of the country, both as affected by government departments and by popular organization and individual effort. The social life of a country is mainly dependent on its economic condition, and we cannot raise one without improving the other. But social well-being is not altogether a question of material wealth. It largely depends on the mental and moral growth of the people, which, while of necessity contracted under a condition of physical depression and a low standard of life, may flourish exceedingly in a community

possessing few material resources. Hence the importance of cultivating and educating the mental powers and self-reliance of the people. A child cannot be always kept in leading strings. Many falls may be the immediate consequence of their removal, but strength and experience are certain to come before long.

### *The Local Government System.*

Few measures of the last century were of more importance to Ireland than Mr. Gerald Balfour's Local Government Act of 1898, which almost revolutionised the administration of local affairs. It is not necessary for me to describe in detail the old system that has been superseded. It was carried on mainly by the Grand Juries and the Boards of Guardians, working under the Local Government Board. The Grand Jury is an institution of considerable antiquity. Introduced into Ireland many centuries ago, it was gradually entrusted with an extraordinary variety of duties, all of which, with the exception of its original criminal jurisdiction, have now been transferred to the new local bodies created under Mr. Balfour's Act. The Grand Jury in England lost or ceased to exercise many of its powers, including the fiscal, a century or two ago, but in Ireland every generation added to its jurisdiction and enlarged its duties. The Act of 1836 established the modern Grand Jury system, and codified the law regulating its administration. The members of the Grand Jury are selected by the High Sheriff of the County, who is himself appointed by the Lord Lieutenant from a list of names submitted by the going juries of assize. The Sheriff's discretion is limited by only one statutory rule, that he must place upon the jury one person from each barony holding freehold lands to the value of £50, or leasehold lands to the value of £100 above the rent. The Grand Jury has no corporate or continuous existence. After it is discharged by the judge of assize, its responsibility comes to an end, and its existence ceases. This is the body to which, in conjunction with the Presentment Sessions, was entrusted the many duties required for county government. In practice its want of continuous existence was prevented from causing much inconvenience by the appointment of certain permanent administrative officers, who carried out its decisions, namely, the County Treasurer, the Secretary, the County Surveyors and the Baronial Rate Collectors. The principal matters administered by the Grand Juries were public works, such as the construction and repair of roads and bridges, the erection and repair of court-houses and gaols. They also made

contributions to district lunatic asylums, county infirmaries, reformatories and industrial schools and police, and gave guarantees to light railways and tramways. In addition, a great variety of statutory duties and obligations devolved on them. The other element in the organization of Irish Local Government was the Poor Law system, which was constituted under an Act of 1838, for the purpose of relieving paupers in workhouses. Owing to the lack of other local bodies, the Boards of Guardians were from time to time given a great variety of powers and duties, such as the making of sewers, the construction of waterworks, the care of burial grounds, the erection of labourers' dwellings, and the administration of the Public Health Acts. They were partly elective and partly *ex-officio*. The electors were given multiple votes, according to their property, and the *ex-officio* members were composed of the resident justices of the peace.

In addition to the administration of Local Government by Grand Juries and Boards of Guardians, the affairs of the cities and the larger towns are regulated by the provisions of certain statutes under which they are organized. These are the "Lighting and Cleansing Act of 1828," the "Municipal Corporations Reform Act of 1840," the "Town Improvement Act of 1854," and certain special Acts which regulate the affairs of Enniskillen, Newry, Galway and the suburbs of Dublin.

This was the system of Local Government that existed in Ireland during the half-century under review. It was, except as regards cities and towns, completely altered by the Local Government Act of 1898, which got rid of the chaos of areas and confusion of duties by the establishment of a County Council in each administrative county, the members of which are to hold office for three years. These councils are elected by the Parliamentary voters, with the addition of duly qualified women and peers. To them is entrusted all the fiscal business of the Grand Jury, except the making of presentments for malicious injury, which is transferred to the county courts. The County Councils are also given the power of levying all the local rates which in future are to be collected under the one head of Poor Rate. They have also the administration of the Diseases of Animals Act, the Technical Education Acts, the management of Lunatic Asylums, and various other local duties. District Councils—Urban and Rural—are also formed for the management of local affairs in smaller areas. These have many of the duties formerly carried out by the Baronial Presentment Sessions and the Boards of Guardians. The latter still continue, and are composed of the same persons as the District Councils, but their duties are in the main

confined to the purpose for which they were originally constituted—the relief of the poor.

As regards the working of the new Local Government system, the last report made by the Local Government Board (28th July, 1902), stated:—"Our further experience enables us to confirm the statement in our last report as to the satisfactory manner in which the duties of the County Councils and Rural District Councils have been discharged. No doubt, in some instances there has been action, or sometimes inaction, which did not seem to accord with the intention of the Legislature, but apart from such exceptional instances, their duties have been satisfactorily and creditably discharged by the councils and their officials throughout Ireland."

### *The Irish Land Acts.*

The changes that have been brought about in the legal position of the owners and occupiers of land in Ireland within the last half-century are perhaps more striking than any that have taken place in other branches of law. In the middle of last century the landlord was the owner of the soil and all that was on it. The occupying tenants had no legal rights beyond what were afforded by the leases or agreements under which they held. The absence of any other means of employment, of other occupations or industries, drove the people back on the land, as the only means of subsistence, and caused a "land hunger" that naturally tended to raise rents, and at the same time fostered an agitation for legislative protection.

The squeezing out of many of the old proprietors that followed the disastrous Famine years, and their replacement by purchasers with strong commercial instincts, resulted in the passing of the Landlord and Tenant Act of 1860—commonly known as "Deasy's Act"—which placed the relation of landlord and tenant in Ireland on the basis of contract instead of on tenure. This change did not allay dissatisfaction and agitation. Ten years passed, and new legislation came—the Land Act of 1870—which gave compensation to the tenant for disturbance and for his improvements when quitting his holding. But neither did this Act bring peace. The tenants declared that a compensation to be awarded to them on quitting their holdings was not what they wanted—that they did not wish to quit; their desire was to hold on. The demand for the "Three F's"—Free Sale, Fixity of Tenure and Fair Rents—went on. The fall in prices and the bad season of 1879 aided the agitation, and Mr. Gladstone passed his Act of 1881,

which practically revolutionized the Land System of Ireland. It gave the "Three F's," and created a special tribunal to deal with the new state of things. From time to time various enlargements and amendments of the Act were passed, the most important of which were introduced by Mr. Arthur Balfour in 1887, and by Mr. Gerald Balfour in 1896.

The result of the various Acts passed within the last thirty years is that the occupying tenants of agricultural land in Ireland have acquired security of tenure subject to the payment of a rent fixed by the Land Commission, which in fixing that rent is bound to take into consideration their improvements. They have also the right to sell their interests in their holdings subject to the landlord's right of pre-emption. If we compare this position with the demands for reform made by the Tenant's League in 1852, and by Mr. Isaac Butt in 1867, we will realize the nature and extent of the change that has taken place within fifty years. It is a common belief that the existing system of dual ownership in Ireland is peculiar to this country, and has got no parallel elsewhere. As I pointed out some years ago in a paper read before this Society on the Ulster Tenant Right Custom,\* the principle of dual ownership can be traced back to an age far older than the feudal system, and we find it in what Sir Henry Maine calls "the Roman duplication of domainial rights." In fact, the form of property in land known to the Roman law as *emphyteusis* probably originated that right to a dual ownership which has been recognized by most of the modern agrarian systems of Europe that are based on the principles of Roman law. A little consideration will convince us that such a system is bound to grow up under certain conditions. Where large tracts of arable land in a populous country come into the hands of proprietors who cannot themselves occupy and cultivate it, and where such land can most suitably and economically be worked by small farmers, a system of dual ownership is inevitable. The same conditions arose in India during the last century as we have in Ireland, and the solution was the same. In Bengal and in the North West Provinces, where the *Zamindari* tenure prevailed (that is where large estates were in the hands of proprietors on whom the State revenue was assessed, usually at about one-half of the rental which they received from the *ryots* or occupying tenants), a strong agitation was carried on, often accompanied by agrarian outrages. The principal matters of contention were the right of occupation (fixity of tenure), and the regulation of

\* Read 30th January, 1894.

rents. The Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885, and the North West Provinces Tenancy Act, passed under the administration of Sir Antony MacDonnell last year, solved the difficulties on lines in some respects similar (having regard to the different conditions) to those of the Irish Land Act of 1881.\*

*Irish Land Purchase and the Extent to which it has been carried on by State Aid.*

Side by side with the legal recognition of dual ownership in Ireland there proceeded a system for the creation of a peasant proprietary by the aid of State loans, when both parties were agreed. The principal Acts under which advances of public money to enable tenants to become proprietors of their holdings were made are :—

The Irish Church Act, 1869.

The Landlord and Tenant (Ireland) Act, 1870.

The Land Law (Ireland) Act, 1881.

The Purchase of Land (Ireland) Act, 1885.

The Purchase of Land (Ireland) Act, 1891.

*Irish Church Act, 1869.*

Under this Act, the Church Temporalities Commissioners were empowered to sell to tenants of Church Lands their holdings at prices to be fixed by the Commissioners themselves. If the tenants refused to buy on the terms offered to them, the Commissioners could sell to the public. The Church Temporalities Commissioners' power as to terms was that they could sell for cash, or on getting one-fourth in cash, the balance of the purchase money being secured on a mortgage of the holding, to be paid off in 32 years by 64 half-yearly instalments.

The Commissioners sold in all to 6,057 tenants at an average price of  $22\frac{2}{3}$  years' purchase of the rents, and the total amount of the money given on loan was £1,674,841, which was issued by the Commissioners of Public Works.

The terms of repayment and the rate of interest charged

\* Sir Antony MacDonnell, in a speech to the Legislative Council of the North West Provinces (November 15th, 1900), in support of his Tenancy Bill, gave a history of the agrarian difficulties of Bengal and the N. W. Provinces that is very instructive to all interested in the Irish Land Question

on loans were afterwards altered and reduced under the Purchase of Land Act of 1885, section 23.

*Landlord and Tenant (Ireland) Act, 1870.*

Under what are known as the "Bright clauses" of this Act, the Landlords and Tenants of agricultural or pastoral holdings could arrange for a sale of their holdings with State aid to be carried out in the Landed Estates Court. Upwards of two-thirds of the price agreed upon could be advanced by the Board of Works to be repaid in 35 years by an annuity at the rate of 5 per cent. on the loan. Under this Act, 877 tenants purchased their holdings, and the amount of the loans issued was £514,536. The total purchase money paid by the tenant purchasers for their holdings was £859,000 being at the rate of  $23\frac{1}{3}$  years' purchase of the rent.

*The Act of 1881.*

Under this Act the Land Commission was empowered to make advances to tenants for the purchase of their holdings, and was enabled to purchase estates for resale to the tenants. The limit of advances was extended from two-thirds of the purchase money (as in the Act of 1870) to three-quarters. The terms of repayment were the same—an annuity of 5 per cent. for 35 years.

Upwards of 731 tenants purchased under this Act, and the advances made amounted to £240,801. These included advances to 405 tenants on seven estates bought under the Act (sect. 26), by the Land Commission in the Landed Estates Court.

*The Purchase of Land (Ireland) Act, 1885.*

Under this Act—commonly known as the "Ashbourne Act"—a sum of £5,000,000 was authorised to be advanced to the Land Commission to enable sales to be carried out between landlords and tenants by agreement, and to enable the Land Commission to purchase estates in the Landed Estates Court for the purpose of re-selling them to the tenants. The Land Commission was empowered to advance the entire of the purchase money subject to the retention of one-fifth by way of guarantee deposit for a period of about  $17\frac{1}{2}$  years, by which time an equivalent amount of the capital advanced had been repaid by means of the sinking

fund. This deposit could be utilised if the tenant purchaser made default in his repayment, and if the amount in default could not be otherwise recovered. Thus the landlord vendor was made a guarantor for the repayment of the annuity by the tenant purchaser. (Sect. 3.)

The advances made under this Act were to be repaid by annual instalments (which included interest and sinking fund), extending over a period of 49 years.

In 1888, the £5,000,000 given under the Act of 1885, being practically exhausted, an additional sum of £5,000,000 was advanced to the Land Commission for the purposes of land purchase (51 & 52 Vic., c. 49). Under the "Ashbourne" Acts 25,368 tenants (on 1,355 estates) became purchasers of their holdings, and the loans made amounted to £9,992,640. The rate of sale was 17 years' purchase of the rent. (Report of the Irish Land Commission, 1902, p. 89.) Under these Acts 101 estates were purchased in the Landed Estates Court for re-sale to tenants, and loans were issued to 2,029 tenants, amounting to £531,277.

#### *Purchase of Land Acts, 1891 and 1896.*

The funds advanced to the Irish Land Commission for the purposes of Land Purchase having again become exhausted, Mr. Balfour in 1891 introduced a new system under which the landlord or vendor was paid in a specially created guaranteed Land Stock (exchangeable for consols at the option of the vendor), equal in nominal amount to the purchase money. This stock bears interest at the rate of  $2\frac{3}{4}$  per cent. per annum, and cannot be redeemed until the expiration of 30 years from the date of the passing of the Act of 1891 (August 5th). The dividends and sinking fund payments required for this stock are paid out of a "Land Purchase Account," established by the Land Commission (Section 4), and to which all moneys received on account of any purchase annuity for the discharge of an advance are paid. If this Land Purchase Account is at any time insufficient to meet the dividends and sinking fund payments (owing, for instance, to default in the repayment of instalments), the deficiency is to be a charge on a "Guarantee Fund," established for the purposes of the Act (Section 5). This Fund is made up of a cash portion and a contingent portion. The cash portion is mainly made up of the Irish Probate Duty (now Estates Duty) grant, and an Exchequer contribution, and the contingent portion consists of the Irish share of the Local Taxation (customs and excise)



duties and certain local grants (Section 5). Any deficiency in the Land Purchase Account is to be paid out of this guarantee fund. The amount of stock that can be issued for each county for purposes of Land Purchase was limited to 25 times the share of the county in the guarantee fund by the Act of 1891 (Section 9). This limit having been reached in the case of Co. Wexford, it has been extended to 50 times the share of the county in the guarantee fund by Mr. Wyndham's Purchase of Land (Ireland) Act, 1891 (1 Edward VII., c. 3). This extension, which practically doubles the amount of money that is available for Land Purchase in Ireland, must be made with the consent of the Treasury, they being of opinion that such can be done without risk of loss to the Exchequer.

The limit of advance under this Act, that is, the capitalized shares of the Irish counties in the guarantee fund, was estimated in 1891 at a total of £29,924,224. Ten years later the estimated amount was £39,145,348.\* and it has been still further enlarged—in fact, practically doubled—under Mr. Wyndham's Act.

The Act of 1891 was amended in various respects by Mr. Gerald Balfour's Act of 1896, which introduced, among other changes, a method of reducing every decade (up to 30 years after the advance was made), the annuity to be paid by the tenant purchaser. As under the "Ashbourne Act" of 1885, this annuity was calculated at £4 per cent. on the purchase money,  $2\frac{3}{4}$  per cent. being for interest, and  $1\frac{1}{4}$  per cent. for repayment of capital or sinking Fund.† Under Mr. Gerald Balfour's system during the first decade after the purchase the annuity is calculated on the original advance, and during the second and third decades on the portion of the advance which is ascertained to be unpaid at the end of the previous decade. The Act of 1896 also permitted the Land Commission to dispense with the whole or any part of the guarantee deposit required under the Act of 1885 if the security for the repayment of the advance was considered to be sufficient without it (Section 29).

The number of loans *issued* under these Acts of 1891 and 1896 to tenant purchasers up to 31st March, 1902 was 36,994, amounting to £10,809,190, being 17.5 years' purchase of the rents (Land Commission Report, 1902, page 116).

The following table gives a summary of the number of Tenant Purchasers, and the amount of loans *issued*

\* See Parliamentary Paper, House of Commons, No. 355, Session, 1901.

† See Act of 1891, Section 1, as amended by the Act of 1896, Section 27.

under the various Acts from 1869 to the 31st March, 1902 :—

Act under which sale carried out.	Number of Tenant Purchasers.	Amount of Loans.	Number of years Purchase of Rent.
Irish Church Act, 1869	6,057	£ 1,674,841	22 $\frac{2}{3}$
Act of 1870 ..	877	514,536	23 $\frac{1}{3}$
Act of 1881 ..	731	240,801	—
Act of 1885 ..	25,368	9,992,640	17
Act of 1891 ..	36,994	10,809,190	17·5
—	70,027	23,232,008	—

This table gives the number and amount of loans *issued* up to 31st March, 1902. In addition loans were *sanctioned* to 3,753 tenants, amounting to £1,044,028.

#### *Legislative Efforts to Improve Irish Agriculture.*

The last decade of the 19th century saw the creation of two important organizations endowed out of public funds for the amelioration and improvement of the condition of the poorer section of the Irish people, namely, the Congested Districts Board and the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction. There are in this country, as in most others, two schools of social and political thought, each of which would effect the same object—the improvement of the condition of the people—in a different manner. One school would depend chiefly on persons nominated by the central government, while the other would rely largely on the advice and assistance of persons selected by the people themselves. One would appoint from above, the other from below. The one would supply the necessary wisdom, the other would ask the people concerned to furnish it. Both these methods are being tried in the organizations to which I have referred. The Congested Districts Board consists of ten members of various shades of political opinion selected by the Imperial Government. The Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction

is subject to the advice of a council mainly elected by the localities affected.

### *The Congested Districts Board.*

The Congested Districts Board was created in the year 1891 to improve the conditions of life of the people in the poorest regions of the south and west coast of Ireland. These people were in a chronic state of famine, and their standard of living was at the lowest point. The part of the country in which they lived was congested, not because there was an over-population in relation to the area of the land, but because of the inferior quality of the soil. Thus we find that while the district in question comprised one-sixth of the total area of Ireland, it had only one-ninth of its inhabitants. The Board was established by Mr. Balfour's Land Purchase Act of 1891,\* which provided that where more than 20 per cent. of the people of any county in Ireland live in electoral divisions of which the total rateable value, when divided by the number of the population, gives a sum of less than thirty shillings for each person, such divisions shall form a separate county for the purposes of the Board, to be called a Congested District County.

The conditions of life in the districts thus committed to the care of the Board had hitherto been wretched in the extreme. The majority of the people lived on small plots quite inadequate for their support. In many cases rights of turbarry, grazing and gathering seaweed were attached to the holdings, which were frequently divided up into an enormous number of patches, often held in common. The method of cultivation was exceedingly primitive, and the breeds of live stock worn out and almost valueless. The inhabitants could not have lived at all by the cultivation of the land, and depended on various subsidiary sources of income. Many were migratory labourers, others earned money by fishing and home industries. The holdings could only be regarded as earning an economic surplus when dealt with as if portions of suitably sized productive farms. Standing by themselves, they seldom yielded an income that would support the family of the occupier, and if a bad year came, famine and misery were wide spread. The housing, clothing and general standard of living were low, often, indeed, approaching the minimum of existence. These were the regions and the conditions of life that the Board was appointed to deal with.

The Congested Districts practically comprise the western

\* 54 & 55 Vic., c. 48, sect. 34.

sea-board of Ireland, with the exception of Clare and parts of Sligo. All the peninsulas that run out into the Atlantic Ocean belong to them, as well as certain interior portions of Galway, Mayo, Roscommon and Leitrim.

The Board consists of seven permanent and three temporary members. The Chief Secretary for the time being and a member of the Land Commission, appointed to represent agricultural and forestry, are included. Its income at present amounts to about £75,000 per annum, mainly composed of interest on the Church Surplus Grant of one and a half millions, amounting to £41,250 a year, and a Parliamentary Grant of £25,000. Certain other funds have also been placed at the disposal of the Board. Power was given to it to take measures to increase the size of small holdings (Act 1891, Sect. 37); to aid migration and emigration, and to assist and develop agriculture, forestry, the breeding of live stock and poultry, weaving, spinning, fishing, including the construction of piers and harbours, and the supply of fishing boats and gear and other suitable industries (Section 39).

During the ten years of the Board's existence it has done much to improve the condition of the people. Itinerant Agricultural Instructors have been employed, "example plots" for the growing of grass seeds and potatoes have been established. Fruit trees, forest trees for shelter clumps, and vegetable seeds have been provided. Sheep dipping for the eradication of disease has been encouraged by the supplying of the necessary apparatus. Efforts have been made to improve the breeding of horses, cattle, sheep, asses and swine by the introduction of the best stock. Much encouragement has also been given to the production of honey, and the improvement of poultry. Help and instruction have been given in potato-spraying. A large part of the work of the Board has been directed to the improvement and enlarging of holdings, and migration from over-crowded areas to specially equipped farms in suitable districts.

The development of sea fisheries has been an important part of the work of the Congested Districts Board. Boats are supplied on easy terms, training is given by competent instructors, and many subsidiary industries are taught. Not the least difficult part of the Board's duties is the developing of home and cottage industries. These comprise basket-making, carpentry, kelp-making, lace-making, knitting, and the manufacturing of carpets and woollens. Many other methods have been tried for improving the condition of the people, including the training of girls in domestic duties.

*The Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction.*

It is hardly necessary to recall the circumstances that led to the creation of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction. Such a Department or Board had been suggested at various times, but the suggestion did not take shape until it was taken up by the "Recess Committee," formed by Mr. Horace Plunkett during the winter of 1896, and which included Lord Mayo, Lord Monteleale, The O'Connor Don, Mr. John Redmond, M.P., Rev. T. A. Finlay, Mr. T. P. Gill, and others. This body drew up and presented to the Irish Government a Report recommending the establishment of a Department for the administration of State aid to Agriculture and Industries, with a minister responsible to Parliament at its head, assisted by a consultative council representative of the agricultural and industrial interests of the country. This recommendation was adopted by Mr. Gerald Balfour, and in the Session of 1899 a Bill was carried through Parliament to give it effect. The Department consists of a President (the Chief Secretary for the time being), and a Vice-President, assisted by secretaries, inspectors, instructors and other officers.

It is kept in touch with public opinion by a Council of Agriculture, 70 per cent. of which is composed of members elected by the County Councils, and the remaining 30 per cent. of persons nominated by the Department. There are, in addition, two Boards—one for Agriculture, and the other for Technical Instruction—of which the majority of the members are nominated or selected by the Council of Agriculture. This Council meets at least once a year for the purpose of discussing matters of public interest in connection with any of the purposes of the Department. "Similar Councils to advise and influence similar Departments have been found by experience in the continental countries, who are Ireland's economic rivals, to be the most valuable of all means whereby the Administration keeps in touch with the opinions of the Agricultural and Industrial classes, and becomes truly responsive to their needs and wishes." \*

The two Boards—of Agriculture and of Technical Instruction—have special advisory powers, and practically no money can be spent without their consent. For the carrying out of its work a capital sum of £200,000 and an annual endowment of £166,000 is given to the Department. Various duties formerly entrusted to some half-dozen State Departments are now given to it. These

\* Inaugural address by Mr. Horace Plunkett at first meeting of the Council in the year 1900.

comprise the powers and duties of the Veterinary Department of the Privy Council, which include the administration of the various Diseases of Animals Acts ; of the Inspectors of Irish Fisheries, which comprise the protection and development of sea and inland fisheries ; of the Registrar-General and of the Irish Land Commission as regards the collection and publication of agricultural and cognate statistics ; of the Commissioners of National Education with respect to practical Agricultural Education ; and of the Department of Science and Art in relation to the College of Science and other Irish institutions under its control, as well as the administration of the grant for Technical Instruction, etc., in Ireland. The Department is not intended to be a body merely for administering State subsidies. Its function is rather—to quote the Vice-President—that of “helping people to help themselves,” which “is the guiding principle of all successful State aid in agricultural development.” Hence it cannot grant any money in aid of a scheme for which funds are not also provided by the local authorities, who are, however, empowered to levy a rate of one penny in the pound for the purpose. The work of the Department includes measures for aiding and developing agriculture, horticulture, forestry, dairying, the breeding of horses, cattle, and other live stock, and poultry, home and cottage industries, flax cultivation and all industries subservient to any of these, and also for aiding and facilitating the carriage and distribution of produce. Many schemes have already been framed and brought into operation for carrying out these duties, which in time should effect an enormous improvement in the economic condition of the country.

The Department does not carry on its operations in localities under the jurisdiction of the Congested Districts Board, unless with the sanction of that body. Sufficient time has not yet elapsed for many local authorities to put in force the various schemes which they, in conjunction with the Department, have been preparing, but it is intended to adopt an extensive system of Agricultural Education, and all the methods which experience has shown elsewhere to be most efficacious for developing agriculture in all its phases.\*

#### *Industrial Progress as Helped by non-Government Organizations.*

The industrial work that is being carried on by the aid of Government Departments and Boards is undoubtedly of the utmost importance. In some respects a still more

\* *Ireland Industrial and Agricultural.*

useful development—because it possesses a higher educational value—is that due to efforts at self-help of the people themselves. It is well known that during the last century various attempts had been made in Germany and other European countries to improve the condition of the agricultural population by the establishment of co-operative methods which enabled the individual farmer to utilize his resources in a manner that would have been impossible if left to himself.

Raiffeisen, the originator of the system of “loan banks,” which bears his name, sought to ameliorate the condition of his poorer agricultural neighbours in Westphalia by organizing various societies on co-operative principles. Most of these failed from want of capital. To supply this he organized in 1849 a co-operative credit association, which was the precursor of the thousands of “People’s Banks” that have supplied necessary capital to the peasants of Germany and Italy for many years past. These “Banks” were formed by associating the peasants of the locality into a society for the granting of small loans to members for productive purposes. Every member is jointly and severally liable for the debts of the association. This system, which proved so valuable in other European countries, was introduced into Ireland in 1894 by the establishment of a Raiffeisen Bank at Doneraile, in County Cork. At the beginning of the present year there were upwards of 103 of such Banks in the country, with a membership of 4,223, and no losses had been incurred from default on the part of borrowers. The managers of these associations are unpaid. They are carried on by, and for the benefit of, the inhabitants of the particular district concerned, and naturally tend to develop the social as well as the business instincts of the people. Mr. Horace Plunkett, in his address as President of the National Co-operative Festival Society (1901–2), said:—“When I tell you that these associations are registered with unlimited liability, that thousands of loans have been made by them to their members, that the cases of unpunctual repayment are rare, and that default is unknown, that the system flourishes best, and is productive of the greatest good in the poorest districts, I think you will fancy that there must be something very like magic in the agency which converts hopelessly insolvent individuals into a community to which capital can be advanced with the certainty of repayment.”

#### *Agricultural Co-operation.*

The same year as that in which the first Raiffeisen Bank was established in Ireland—1894—saw also the

foundation of the Irish Agricultural Organization Society. This grew out of Mr. Horace Plunkett's efforts to organize industrially Irish agriculturalists. Its objects were to improve the condition of the agricultural population of Ireland, by teaching the principles and methods of co-operation as applicable to farming and the allied industries ; to promote industrial organization for any purposes which may appear to be beneficial ; and generally to counsel and advise those engaged in agricultural pursuits (see Rules of the Society). By the aid of the Agricultural Organization Society at the beginning of the present year there were in existence in Ireland upwards of 268 Co-operative Dairy Societies, 106 Agricultural Societies, 29 Poultry Societies, and 102 Co-operative Banks. The purpose of these Societies, as described by Mr. R. A. Anderson, the Secretary of the Irish Agricultural Organization Society, are the manufacture of butter on the best and most scientific principles in creameries ; the joint purchase of agricultural requirements and the sale of produce ; the improvement of live stock, and methods of tillage ; the acquisition of machinery for the joint use of the members ; the development of early market gardening ; the introduction of the continental system of collecting, grading and packing eggs ; the establishment of experimental farms ; the formation of co-operative rural banks on the Raiffeisen principle ; the promotion of rural industries, such as lace-making, weaving, embroidery and needlework. To forward these aims, the Society employs a number of expert instructors, and carries on a regular system of technical instruction in addition to its work of organising. "The value and potency of organized effort," to again quote Mr. Plunkett, "whether for business or pleasure, have been brought home to the people, and no lesson was more needed amongst the poor, spiritless, and isolated peasantry of rural Ireland. We hope to use the Societies, whose primary function is business purposes, for the brightening of rural life on the purely social and domestic side."

#### *The Development of Social and Economic Life.*

When we come to sum up the results of our review of the past and present in Ireland, there are, I think, certain conclusions that everybody will agree with, certain lessons that all should take to heart. That the population of Ireland has reached a point that cannot suffer any further diminution without real loss to the well-being of the country is, I think, now generally admitted. Comparing Ireland with similarly circumstanced countries on the continent of



Europe, its population is undoubtedly dwindling below what is required for a healthy economic life. And the character of the drain makes the injury especially noticeable. Naturally the men and women who go from its shores are the best, the most active, and the most enterprising of its people. Those who are left include, as a consequence, a residue composed of persons physically unfit and intellectually inferior. Under such a social condition we cannot have a healthy and progressive community. There are many social and economic causes that will explain why the people are so desirous of leaving the country, irrespective altogether of political reasons. A population naturally virile and enterprising, they are disinclined to spend their lives in poverty-stricken and hum-drum surroundings. They hear from relations and friends of the possibilities of other lands, of greater openings and wider opportunities. If we are to restrain the outflow, we must not dam it up, but divert and absorb it. We must give opportunities and chances at home that will attract the interest of the people of the rising generation. We must not alone improve their economic condition, but make their lives brighter and happier. Much may continue to be done by the introduction of improved industrial methods. But, as I have before suggested, mere material prosperity is not the chief end to be sought after. Let us continue to develop the intellects of the people, to give them something to think about, and at the same time discourage the tendency to introspection and morbid brooding that leads to lunacy and social stagnation. Let us try to improve the village life of the people, to encourage amusements and social gatherings; in fact, aim after that happy rural life that Oliver Goldsmith has described so delightfully in the opening lines of the "Deserted Village." We must also encourage methods of co-operation and mutual help. We must make education practical and suitable to the necessities of the people. We must get business habits and methods into their minds, and not alone into the minds of the poorer, but also of the wealthier classes in the community, who still largely lack initiative and business instinct. Very different is it on the other side of the Atlantic, where no opportunity is lost, no opening is neglected of adding to the wealth and prosperity of the individual and of the community. Our main efforts should accordingly be directed to developing the self-reliance and the thought of the people. This can best be done by encouraging industries and employments that require the exercise of qualities which prevent the mind from stagnating. Let us give the peasants some more exhilarating occupation than that of watching the

tails of their cows growing. Occupations that require no thought, no initiative, that do not develop industrial habits and instincts, are deadening to the intellect of the individual and injurious to the community. Many people, struck by the constant references to the commercial policy of two centuries ago, which is usually considered to have destroyed our commerce and throttled our industries, ask why are the Irish always living on the memory of former wrongs, of past grievances? The diet unquestionably affords little nourishment, and is undoubtedly unstimulating. Why not, it is said, apply yourselves to present industry, and so secure future prosperity? But is not this somewhat of a counsel of perfection? The most serious injury caused by the commercial policy of the 17th and 18th centuries was the repression and destruction of the industrial spirit in the people, without which there can be no hope of material progress. The man who is born deaf is also dumb; give him his hearing and he quickly acquires the power of speech. So in Ireland, though we may preach until we are tired on the necessity for industrial energy, we will never get it until we breed in the people the habit, the method, and the spirit that create it. The business mind is every whit as essential for the industrial development of a community as the skilled hand of the workman.

In this necessarily slight and superficial sketch of contemporary Irish economic history, I have carefully avoided any issues or discussions of a political character. The traditions and rules of this Society, as well as my own official position, would render it inexpedient and improper to introduce any such issues. I am aware that in a country in which political methods are regarded by the majority of the inhabitants, and by every school of political thought, as vital and fundamental, and as furnishing the true explanation of the economic situation, my survey will be considered unsatisfactory and inadequate. I would, however, point out that no matter what may be our views on the influence of administration and legislation in determining the condition of the people, it will be of some service to take stock, as I have said, of our social and economic position, and of the material changes that have taken place with respect to it, during the past and present generations. The knowledge so acquired is essential to those of us who would aid in the future advancement and development of the country and of its people.

#### *Discussion.*

Judge Shaw (County Court Judge of Kerry), in proposing a vote of thanks to Mr. Bailey, referred to the paper as a most

interesting and suggestive one. The last fifty years of the 19th century were most important years in Irish life, and it was almost essential for those dealing with Irish life and facts, as they find them at the present day, to know something of the history that produced those conditions. The paper they had just listened to showed that Mr. Bailey took the fullest advantage of the opportunities which his position afforded for studying those conditions. He himself was of opinion that Mr. Bailey somewhat exaggerated the immediate effect of the Repeal of the Corn Laws on Irish Agriculture. He was not of the opinion that the Repeal of the Corn Laws had a disastrous effect on the tillage industry of Ireland. As regards the emigration question, no one could help deploring the enormous depletion of the population of Ireland. But there were points in connection with Irish emigration that were not sufficiently considered. Emigration from Ireland was not an unique fact in the history of the present time. It was part of a much greater fact to be found in all countries, and particularly in England and Scotland, at the present time, and that was the desertion of rural life for town life. Emigration from Ireland, which was almost entirely agricultural, was not greater in proportion than the emigration from the rural and agricultural parts of England and Scotland to the towns, the difference being that in one case the emigrants from the rural districts of Ireland, having no towns to go to, left for other lands, while in England and Scotland they went into the large cities. His experience of Irish emigration was that it was largely the result of the increased standard of comfort among the people. It was a misfortune that there were no large industries in Ireland on which the surplus population could find a living, but until Ireland had those industries, it seemed to him that the emigration of the surplus population was a necessity. Reference was made to the standard of comfort of the people. His observation of that matter led him to believe that the standard had risen enormously amongst the people. Referring to the Local Government Act, he said the introduction of that measure was for Ireland a subject of good hope and augury. From what he had seen, the entrusting of local government to the elected representatives of the people was one of the greatest educative influences ever introduced into Ireland. It had taught the people many useful lessons, and would teach them many more. Mistakes might be made and things done which some might smile at, or feel disgusted with, but beyond all question the putting of power into the hands of the people themselves was a most valuable experience, because it would teach the people, amongst other things, how public money could be managed, and how things could be done economically or extrava-

gantly, efficiently or inefficiently. To put the responsibility of managing the public funds on the Councils would have a most beneficial effect on Irish life, and he believed it would work out for the good of the people.

Rev. T. A. Finlay, S. J., in seconding the vote of thanks, said the president had put forth the view that the wealth of a country was not exactly a thing that can be measured by money, but it was rather the weal and well-being of the people. It was, therefore, by the conditions of the people that they were to judge of the wealth of a country, and not by its exports or imports alone. No matter what may be the wealth of a nation, unless they could show that, as a matter of fact, a decent standard of comfort is attained by the people as a whole, taking a fair average, they were not warranted in calling it wealthy, or in speaking of it as possessing the weal or well-being which should belong to a nation. They had been taught by the Manchester school and others to think a nation as well off when the total wealth of a country, divided by the number of the population, yielded £30 or £40 per head, when perhaps 30 or 40 per cent. of the people may be living below the average of a decent existence. As regards the Repeal of the Corn Laws and its effect on Irish agriculture, he noticed that Judge Shaw contested the views put forward by Mr. Bailey. He himself believed the effects of the Repeal were only felt in all their force when carrying capacity and steam transport were fully developed. In his opinion, all legislation for Ireland must run on special lines of its own. In this respect Ireland was a separate entity, and economic legislation for it must be specific in character, and specially adapted to the peculiar needs of the country.

Mr. Bailey having acknowledged the vote of thanks, the proceedings terminated.

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## 2.—*The Forestry Question Considered Historically.*

By C. LITTON FALKINER, Esq., Barrister-at-Law.

*Legal Assistant Land Commissioner.*

[Read Friday, January 23rd, 1903.]

SOME twenty years ago, as most of us remember, there was no more popular catch-word among persons interested in Irish economics than what was called the re-afforesting of Ireland. A number of reformers, many of them eminent in the public life of the day, and all of them zealous for the material well-being of the country, had persuaded themselves that in the restoration of the abundant forests and