Celt, Dane, and Anglo-Norman

An economic history of Ireland

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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.

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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 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 as 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 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 wide-spread, 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 Mijni Novgorod.

Nor does the evidence go to show the existence of a large foreign trade. There was considerable intercourse 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 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) 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, miserable 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 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 ½ ton) of wheat to the acre (probably the Irish acre is 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 (1¼ 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 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 Bermingham 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 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 inter--course 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 book [13] 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 famous Statute of Kilkenny in 1367, with its futile pro- visions 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 unsettle-

ment, 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, Kinsale, 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 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 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.

[1] Dr. P. W. Joyce. “ Social History of Ancient Ireland,” I.. 39, 40.

[2] Joyce. *op, cit.*, II., 381.

[3] Joyce, *op, cit.*, II., 422—433.

[4] “ Calendar of Justiciary Rolls. Ireland. 1295—1303” (ed. Mills), pp. 116, 221.

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

[6] Bonn. “ Englische Kolonisation in Irland.” I., 394.

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

[8] “ Account Rolls of Holy Trinity, Dublin” (ed. Mills).

[9] “ Calendar of Justiciary Rolls. Ireland, 1295-1303.” pp. 106. 107.

[10] *ibid*,.pp. 19. 144. 225.

[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).

[13] “ The Making of Ireland and Its Undoing.”

[14] “ statute Rolls of Ireland, Henry VI..” p. 171.

[15] *ibid.*, p. 697.

[16] W. C. Stubbs in “ Proc. R. Society of Antiq. (I.),” vol. XLIX., p. 60.

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