

Praties and Dogmas

Ireland, as I saw it : the character, condition, and prospects of the people

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My People are destroyed for lack of Knowledge—HOSEA.

1850

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The mail car had arrived, and was standing in the street. As we returned from the church, the crowd gathered around us, as clamorous in their beggary as before. We procured our sacks, placed them in the “well” of the car and took our seats. When the multitude found us about to leave, a large portion left us. But several hung about, with some of whom we entered into conversation. Among the number was a little lad, it might be, fifteen years old, who particularly attracted my attention. He was well formed, and, phrenologically speaking, had a fine head—large, broad, high, and every way well balanced. His features were uncommonly fine, sparkling with intelligence and beauty. His dress was poor, but decent. The patches were all sewed tight ; there were no rags dangling about. His shirt was clean, as was common with all, and so were his hands, and face, and feet. He seemed anxious to inquire about our country, and I indulged him with my chief attention. He expressed a strong desire to go there, but saw no means by which he could do so. To try him, I asked him if he would go with me.

“Aye, yer honor, and serve ye wi’ all my soul.”

He spoke very good English, but tinged with the Kerry accent, just enough to make it exceedingly pleasing.

“Will you go with me now—get right on the car and start off immediately ? for I am going, you see.”

“Yes, sir ! an’ I will run an’ tell my sister, and come right back as fast as I can ;” and he started ;

I called him back, telling him I could not take him, as I was going to other countries before I returned ; and I needed further recommendations that he was a good boy.

Many voices answered, saying, “James Mahanna is a fine boy, an’ ivery body likes him.” Even his young companions, who showed some marks of envy at my partiality for him, after rejecting their offers to go home with me, declared he was the best among them.

I inquired of him what he could do, and how long he would live with me. He said he would do any thing he could, and live with me as long as I wished, if I would clothe him and give him enough to eat. He said he could read and write a little, but, since his parents died, he had not been at school much, as he could not pay the tuition, and it was all his sisters could do to support themselves.

I asked him if he could work. He said he could when he could get any thing to do, and that was not often, as there were so many more who were always looking out for jobs. Several bystanders assured me he was a very faithful boy. One of his sisters worked from home, he told

me, for £2 a-year ; and the other did what she could in the town. One was twenty, the other eighteen.

“ An’ very cliver gearls they are,” said a middle-aged man, who till then had not spoken, though he had observed closely all that had been said ; “ an’ it’s the kind thing yer honor’ll do, an’ he takes the young lad till Amiriky. It’s a smaart man he’ll be afther makin’, it is, an’ ye geve him a chance.”

The boy looked pleased at receiving such a direct recommendation ; for the man who had spoken seemed to share largely the confidence of those about him. An other, coming nearer to me, said, “ It is soo, yer honor. Misther O’Donnelly has said thruly, an’ ye may bleve ivery word uv it. Ye may, an sure Jam is a good boy, an’ll do all yer honor likes of him.”

Several others attested to the good character of the lad, and all seemed glad at the good fortune which seemed to await him. There is scarcely a man or boy, or young woman in the country, among the common people, who would not esteem it great good fortune, almost a mark of a special Providence, to be offered an opportunity to go to America under such circumstances as these.

My heart was pained to think the hopes which had been awakened, the brightest, probably, he ever had, must be so soon disappointed. I am not quite sure I did right, but I could not find it in my heart to blast them all at once. Perhaps I did wrong to say so much ; but it was no more than what every body is talking about, but many dare not hope for. I took the name of the lad, and promised, if *I found it convenient*—what a miserable excuse—I would send for him in season to meet me at Liverpool, so as to return with me. He was delighted with the idea, and wanted to know if I would not also take his sisters, to work at service in my family. This I thought I might as well encourage, and so told him if I sent for one I would send for all.

“ An good servants ye’ll have,” said the former speaker.

“ Betther can’t be foound in all the kingdom—I know them weel-a-bit these many yares.”

“ Tis the same I’d like to spake yer honor ov um. It’s joost over the strate from them I live. Sorra a comfort have the darlints had since the good Lord took their blissid mither up to heaven. ’Tis wishin some kind gintilmin, like yerself, would take these poor childers till Amiriky, I’ve bin these many days. The blissid mither’ll sure remember ye.”

Much more was said to the same purpose, for, when these Irishmen start on a course there is no end to the race. They are most extravagant in their praise or condemnation, and neither is willing to be outdone. I was surprised to admiration at the interest manifested in behalf of the lad, who, I have no doubt, deserved all the encomiums bestowed upon him. But it is not often that we see such proofs of disinterestedness among the Irish. Necessity has forced them into the narrowest selfishness, though naturally they have generous hearts—for their immediate friends, at least, and lofty ideas of personal distinction. But how can people, so oppressed, and starved, and ignorant, and superstitious as they are, cultivate the higher virtues, the loftier sentiments, the nobler qualities of human nature, or even keep themselves, under such untoward circumstances, from depravity and shame. It is a marvel that the Irish are no worse than we find them ; that they are not more fierce and cruel than the savages of the wilderness, for they are not without provocation. Christianity, disguised and disfigured as it is, has a powerfully restraining influence over them, and keeps them back in so many cases, from the grosser crimes of vengeance. They have learned much of long-suffering, and patient

endurance in the schools of experience, under whose severe discipline they have been writhing for centuries. The ministers of religion have taught them “ to abdicate all right and title to their own *will*—to their actions,—nay to their own thoughts—to be no longer their own masters, but in perpetual obedience” to others. They have learned their lessons too well, as their deplorable condition testifies to all, wherever they go. They have lost that manliness, that self-reliance, and immediate dependence upon God, which looks above the wrongs and outrages of the world, and seeks in Heaven’s name to over-master them. The command of a supposed superior has become to them the will of God, and so they tamely submit to the wrongs and burdens piled upon them ; till, at last, the hope of a deliverance has vanished, and despair and beggary have taken its place.

Irishmen can never rise in the scale of moral excellence, till this monstrous yoke is taken from them. When that is done, they may begin to hope, for they will *feel* a freedom and a responsibility to which they are now strangers. They will start up the ascent of a moral elevation, down which they have been forced by the oppressions of church and state. Each advance will encourage to bolder efforts, till every stumbling-block shall be taken out of the way, and they will run fearlessly in the heavenward race, with the glittering prize before them. The multitude who bow at the tinkling of a bell, or cross themselves at a particular signal, in the church, while a service is going on in a language they do not understand, are acting mechanically, not from conviction ; not as men should act, whose souls commune with God, and drink in his spirit of wisdom and liberty. They are honest, sincere, devout ; and so are the worshippers of Budha and the followers of Mahomet. Are they wise ? Do they comprehend ? Is it judgment, or habit, free-will or cowering submission? The unbiased mind does not hesitate to give an answer.

To Tralee.

The horse was harnessed to the car ; another passenger took his seat with us ; I spake some encouraging words to the people ; gave James my hand, in proof of my sincere regard, promising not to forget him ; and, amid the hearty benedictions of the people for a prosperous journey and safe return, we started for Tralee, distant nineteen miles.

We passed, on our way, a large, unfinished building, designed for a cathedral church. Its proportions are immense. Its style elegant ; but those who commenced its erection did not exercise the prudence suggested in the Gospel—to count the cost before beginning the work. This is another proof of the wrong of priestcraft. Here is a poor, ignorant, degraded, half-starved population. They have not the means of procuring the common necessities of life ; most of them can neither read nor write ; and yet a tax is laid upon them to rear a stately edifice, which, in architectural beauty and grandeur, shall vie with any thing in the country. Immense sums have been expended already, and yet the walls are not completed. It stands there, another, but yet unfinished proof of the pride and fallacy of an arrogant priesthood, for the people had no voice in the design and execution of it. The old chapel is commodious, but inferior in its appearance. It does not compare well with the claims of supremacy, nor rank above the old church of the Protestants. Forgetting the meek and humble spirit of Christianity, which sanctifies even poverty and makes it tolerable, it was deemed advisable to erect a splendid edifice, which should become attractive to the outward eye, acceptable to worldly pride, able to flatter this simple people with the notion that God has been very kind to them, in giving them a building so much superior to their neighbors !

There might be a seeming fitness in all this—for the world and the church do so—if many persons, already impoverished, were not denied the means of subsistence, for lack of what is here piled up in wrought stones laid in mortar, one upon an other—not for convenience, but

for pride. It may be too utilitarian to speak thus ; but I can not forbear the thought, and hence I may as well utter it. It is questionable whether all attempts at display, above real comfort, neatness, and beauty, are not, at all times and in all places, a violation of the spirit of that religion whose founder was meek and lowly, requiring his followers to be “ not conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of their minds,” so as to raise another standard on the purity of their lives, the sublimity of their hopes, and sincerity of their devotions, which should spread above the low and sordid pride of earth. God “ dwells not in temples made with hands, neither is he worshipped by men’s hands, as though he needed anything.” We know that true piety seeks no display ; and genuine benevolence does not sound a trumpet before its face. Truth can be taught in simple words ; goodness enforced by humble actions ; and virtue recommended without a grand display. There is much to please the eye, and delight the fancy, in the architectural symmetry and gay decorations of a massive building ; something truly grand and overpowering in the performance of showy religious rites, as the chants and responses resound in dying echoes among the lofty arches of an old Gothic cathedral ; and one feels his passions stirred, and his heart melted to tears, precisely as he does in the theatre, or at an Italian opera. In both cases, it is the *music* and the *acting* that affects him, for he does not understand the language of either.

But I will not discuss this topic here. Yet I can not suppress the thought that there is something strangely inconsistent in this attempt to extract from the substance of this wretched people, by promises and threats, in public and in private, at the confessionals and at home ; involving not only their duty and respectability here, but affecting their prospect of salvation hereafter. Cases were related to me which justify these remarks, and demand the severest reprobation. Finding it impossible to wrench from this famishing population the means to complete this magnificent edifice, an emissary has been sent to America to beg of our laboring citizens the adequate amount. Religion, controlled by misguided and proud partizans, has done strange things in this world of ours.

A little way above the town stands the poor-house—a large, new building, very handsomely situated, with fine, open grounds about it, well fenced, and very neat. It is the only sign of improvement and progress in the place. It looks more like a palace than any thing to be seen, not excepting the lordly mansion of the Earl of Kenmare.

A short distance further, we met one hundred and fifty or two hundred boys, from twelve years downward, who belong to the work-house. They had been out a mile or two, for a walk, under the charge of two or three keepers. They were plainly dressed in gray clothes, which looked quite neat. They were walking two and two, and seemed very social and happy. Two little urchins had become leg-weary, and were mounted on the backs of two of the largest, who were very frolicsome under their burdens. These children are fed and clothed at public charge, and taught to read, and write, and work. Their condition, compared with the masses of children, is fortunate. Few would object to have their children in the work-house. But those who have any property complain bitterly of the enormous taxes levied to support the government which oppresses them, the church which curses them, and the poor-house which makes them all poor. The doctrine of *legal association* finds a hard illustration in the condition of Ireland.

Looking back from the eminence over which we passed, the scenery is grand and beautiful beyond description. Seen in the clear sunlight of that charming day, every thing appeared to good advantage. Gauzy clouds were wrapt about the highest peaks, and the shadows which fell upon the dark glens contrasted strongly with the clear green meadows, the checkered fields, and silvery lakes. Every thing was so quiet, soft and beautiful, that I could not resist

the feeling of highest admiration. The only drawback in all that region of natural beauty, and splendor, is the condition of the people who dwell there. They, like a blotch upon the face of beauty, mar the whole aspect, and leave the heart sad, on taking a farewell view, and ever after, when memory revisits the scenes of that lovely spot of earth.

I have dwelt at length, perhaps tediously, upon the scenery about Killarney, because, in itself, it is remarkably fine, and being considered superior to any other in the United Kingdom, it deserves particular description. Besides it surprised me with its peculiar attractions being unlike any in our own country, and far more rugged and beautiful than I had expected to see in the Emerald Isle. I had never read a particular description of the mountains and rural beauties of this country, but always thought of it as low and flat, and half covered with bogs and fens, with little variety of hill and dale, mountain and plain. What was my surprise to see these ranges of rocky mountains, piled carelessly together, heap upon heap, split up by deep and narrow glens, and bordered by overhanging cliffs, up whose jagged sides creep the tangled honeysuckle, and wild grape, with glassy lakes, whose fretted sides are skirted with trees of most luxurious growth, and studded with charming villas, where wealth and pleasure find a secure abode.

With the character of a people we are apt to associate the physical character of the country they inhabit. It is generally thought there is an air of freedom and lofty ambition about mountainous regions which is not breathed in low and marshy plains. Looking from that stand-point, who would have thought to find more than sixty mountains in Ireland above two thousand feet high, and several attaining to more than three thousand feet? But such is the fact. The face of the country is greatly diversified, equal to the most hilly States of our Union, and the soil is surprisingly rich and productive, when tolerably cultivated. There is no cause for the misery and degradation which prevails so extensively here, except in the monstrous exactions and oppressions of the Government and the Church, and the consequent ignorance and inanity of the people.

Heaven has dealt liberally with this land and made it all the fancy of poets have said of it, “the Emerald Isle—the gem of the ocean.” And could a spirit of self-identity, independence, and individual responsibility be awakened, and the onerous impediments of priests and landlords be taken away, this people, naturally so full of wit and endurance, would soon rise in the scale of humanity to a rank equal to any other nation. As it is, there is little hope of their regeneration, except by a removal to other and more favoring climes; nor then, if they take with them the most galling chains that hold them back from prosperity—which too many of them do—a *tame* submission to the will of spiritual task-masters, and filth, and ignorance in which so many of them are content to live.

Crossing the ridge of hills called Slievemish, not more than a dozen miles in extent, we had, from the summit, a splendid view of the whole southern range of mountains, stretching from Millstreet, west by Killarney, to Valentia, where they dip into the ocean; of the Brandon hills on the west, and stack hills on the north, with the most delicious valleys between. A point not far from us attains an elevation of nearly three thousand feet.

Along the road, for some distance, there is a bleak tract of moorland, which is sparsely inhabited and badly cultivated. In one place we saw a hut, or pen, built in the Queen’s highway, by placing boards or rails so that one end would rest upon the stone wall, and the other on the ground; a covering of straw and green turf was thrown over these sticks, and the house was finished. It was such a one as we have seen put up, temporarily, for swine, among some of the least thrifty farmers in the back settlements of our country. An opening was left on one side for a door-way, over which hung a ragged quilt, thrown partly aside, as we

passed, so that we could look in, and see an old woman sitting on the straw, her nakedness scarcely half covered by the rags she was holding about her. Two other women, a man, and several children were about the pen, all of them in tattered and filthy garments. They looked as if in a state of complete destitution, without food or friend, or a ray of hope to kindle a thrill of joy in their hearts.

As we passed at a rapid rate, they looked up wistfully, but were too emaciated to come to the road in season to beg. We passed several squads of people, apparently families, sitting by the way side, or lying upon the grass, with baskets and bundles about them.

These, the driver told us, were families who had been turned out of their houses by their landlords, and were wandering about in search of a home, or for something to do. They subsisted by beggary, and often, generally, he thought, slept by the road side. We asked him what he thought would become of them ?

“ Och, faix, an they’ll stharve as many a poour crayture did last winther. Twas not sthrange to see um in scores along the rood stark dead, an the childers by their sides a weeping as their hearts would brake. Yer honors know nothing of poour Ireland, as ye sees it now. ’Tis thruth I’m telling ye ; sorra a lie in it, at all ; and may the Lord have mercy upon my shoul.”

The last part was uttered in a solemn tone, as if he suspected us of incredulity. We asked why these people did not go to the poor house.

“ The alms house do ye mane ? Troth, there’s no room for um. The divil a one can git in there any hoo. Its brim full. Its murther to turn these poour craytures out o’ doors to stharve. May the hooly mither remimber them ! They are cruel bastes, the landlords, begorra, and I’m bould to say it ov them.”

A little farther on the country improves, and we passed the elegant seat of a Mr. Blenerhasset. I remembered the name, as one associated with another in our country, made notorious by the basest acts that ever disgraced the annals of depravity and crime, in high life ; and also by the elegant speech of one of our most distinguished orators, who asked “ Who is Blennerhasset ?” Whether it was from this part of Erin, that the distinguished exile came to a beautiful island in the Ohio, which still bears his name, I did not learn. But the remembrance was awakened by the mention of the name of the proprietor of this villa, which, for rural elegance, compares favorably with that of his fellow-countryman before alluded to.

Still farther, we passed a large distillery standing back from the road, near a handsome grove. This is another of the fountains of wrong, whose streams spread poverty and crime all over the island, and reduce this poor people still lower in degradation. Every where the traveler sees sign boards over doors, with the ominous words, “ Licensed to sell spirituous liquors, and beer, and tobacco.” The excise tax is one of the heaviest burdens upon the land, though it is indirectly levied, and voluntarily paid. It is like paying the man who abuses us— “ being hanged and paying a forty shilling”—purchasing the cause of suffering and shame. Still the government carries on an indirect traffic which it knows to be pernicious, lends it its sanction, and, for a miserable fee, protects particular persons in the monopoly of making all the drunkards in the country. Is not the government “ *particeps criminis*” to all the evils which result from the whisky traffic ? How can it escape ?

This is a grave matter, and deserves consideration. This may not be the place to discuss it, but I could not forbear the allusion, for the evils are too obvious to escape the notice of the

most careless observer. The systems of legislation are undergoing great improvements, and a growing philanthropy seeks, by wholesome enactments, to dissuade from crime, in order to prevent its punishment. The doctrine of avoidance daily gains importance in the minds of wise and judicious law-givers, and, it is hoped, will, some day, be so well understood that the evils which now afflict this country, and most others, will be taken out of the way, that men may do themselves and the community no harm.

Tralee

Tralee is situated in the bottom of a delightful valley, about a mile from the head of a small inlet, which sets in from the bay of the same name, with which it is connected by a ship channel of recent construction. The hills on the north rise in gentle undulations ; but on the south, stretching off to the west, is a range of abrupt hills, covered with brown heather, and dotted with white cabins and patches of tilled ground far up towards their summits. The town itself shows many signs of thrift I had not expected to see, in this part of the country. Some of the streets are spacious and regularly laid out, and many houses are new and handsome, and the grounds about them are tastefully decorated. A fair proportion of the inhabitants are well dressed and genteel in their manners.

I noticed many very handsome women sitting by their windows, reading, walking in the streets, or present in the church. I was surprised at such marks of refinement, so unlike the character of the people we have seen since leaving Cork. I am sorry to be compelled to add, however, that we also saw specimens of destitution, and misery, more horrid than any before described.

In one place we saw an old woman lying on a sort of bed, which had been made of old rags, upon some boxes, by the side of a yard fence. Two sticks were stuck in the ground, on the top of which was placed an old door, the other side resting on the fence. This formed her only shelter. A ragged quilt was spread over her, which she wrapped closer about her as we came near. A dirty cap was on her head, beneath it her shriveled, cadaverous face, faintly tinged with a hectic fever, one hand, withered to a skeleton, lay by her cheek on the coarse pillow of straw, which must have been gathered from the stable near by. Close to her sat a middle aged, and more decently dressed female, who might have been her daughter. She begged of us, in the name of God, of the blessed Savior, and the Holy Virgin ; in strong words which seemed familiar to her, bartering freely the rewards of heaven, for one poor ha'-penny, for the sick, and dying woman. The old lady muttered some words in answer to our inquiries, which were scarcely intelligible ; indicating, however, that it was the " will of God," and apparently trying to submit, as well as she could, to what she seemed to regard a dire necessity. One or two younger women, and some small children, gathered around us, perfect pictures of destitution, the most abject and loathsome. It was impossible for us to contemplate this scene of misery. We had not nerve to listen to their tale of wo. What we saw was enough —too much almost, for human credulity.

It was more, by far, than we believed possible in a Christian land ; in a town of twelve thousand inhabitants, and the capital of Kerry county, close by the elegant mansions of opulent merchants and landholders, where fashion and luxury make a fair display ; and only a few rods from churches of various denominations, where God is professedly worshipped, in the name of the merciful Redeemer, who gave it as a witness of the divinity of his mission, that " the poor have the Gospel preached to them ;" and made the standard of acceptance to the honors he came to bestow, " I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat ; thirsty, and ye gave me drink ; naked, and ye clothed me ; a stranger, and ye took me in ; I was sick, and ye

visited me ;” assuring them, that inasmuch as they had done it unto one of the least of his brethren, they had done it unto him.

Mark our further astonishment, when, as we turned away from this place, we saw posted up, close by, and in many other places about the town, notices of a sermon and a collection for that day, to take place in the Methodist church, in aid of “ Foreign Missions.” My God ! thought I, is it come to this, that these poor creatures—thy children—are to be laid on boards in the street, and left to starve, while christians are called upon, in the name of religion, and the hopes of heaven, to give their substance to help convert the heathen ? How strangely is the Gospel of thy Son interpreted ! How singularly are its commands applied ! Is this the evidence of a living, saving faith ? the working of that charity without which we are nothing ? Why will the wise in their generation be sticklers about dogmas and forms of worship, while the masses pine in ignorance, and die in beggary, for lack of true knowledge ? Here is a prolific soil, a genial climate, and every physical ability which a bountiful God could bestow, and yet what heart-rending scenes of starvation and misery ! what wails of oppression ! What appalling horrors ; what stoic indifference on the part of the better—some times the religious, portion of the community ; what inhuman neglect on the part of government, which pretends to exercise royal protection over her colonies !

We turned from this horrid picture, and went away to seek some object to divert our minds, and relieve us from the painful feelings which had overwhelmed us. We did not succeed. The elegance of some of the public buildings, the court-house, the church, the Catholic chapels, the meeting houses of Presbyterians and Methodists, the hospitals, the Union work-house, the infantry barracks, the green park, the fine bay—nothing could eradicate the impressions of that wretched family, which inhumanity suffered to remain in the open street, under circumstances which appealed so forcibly to every generous and Christian feeling for sympathy and relief. More than once I turned to go back and cut short my means of traveling, by contributing sufficient to make them all comfortable. But then I felt what an insufficient thing is individual charity, where there is so much poverty and suffering. I cannot avert the evil, turn back the tide, or check the streams which are swelling constantly the flood of pauperism already spread so widely over this land. The root is deeper than I can reach, and useless is the effort of a stranger to do more than give a drop of comfort as he passes by.

So I tried to stifle the breathings of what little benevolence had not been steeled to indifference by the shameless beggary we had already been subjected to. The effort was vain, for that and other like pictures haunt me still ; and by no other principle than that a man’s own is at his disposal, and judgment does not justify an indiscriminate bestowment of his temporal possessions. Of course, the history of the past, the philosophy of our political and social economy, the doctrines and precepts of our pulpits, the conduct of Christians, the judgment and prudent calculation of our heads, all join in this opinion upon this subject ; but still the heart demurs—it will not rest satisfied. There are deep feelings which come welling up at the sight of such miseries, which relax the tight cords of all our systems, and make us pitiful and sad—unless we have the means and disposition to afford relief. And this feeling is not relieved by the fact that one is in the possession of every desired comfort himself, which he claims as the reward of his own industry and prudence. The heart will be satisfied by no such logic, but continues clamorous for the exhibition of sympathy, and a willingness to share an other’s wo, and help, by every practical means, to obtain relief.

The traveler’s soul is often imbittered by such scenes of degradation and misery. The splendid palaces of kings and noblemen, the exquisite beauty of royal galleries of art, the bibliothekes of wisdom, and even the grandeur of natural scenery, the most powerful antidote of all, are inadequate to erase from the memory such pictures of misery as one sees in Ireland.

While I write, the endearments and comforts of home, the general prosperity of friends and country, and the reflection, in the most favorable light, that I gave some small expressions of sympathy, can not still the warfare in my soul, that there is a wrong, a great and crying guilt some where, for which a fearful requisition shall be made. The responsibility can not rest on the mere passer-by ; and yet, as one among men I feel it. I had not means to give, nor power to correct ; but I had a heart to feel—but what is feeling, to hungry mouths and grieving hearts ? It is bread and clothes they need, and a chance to do, more than prayers ! Still there is a power in sympathy, a virtue in prayer, which blend with those deeper wants than worldly famine can reach, or any phase of abstract theology satisfy. A penny bestowed with such a grace, brings more real comfort than the cold charity of half-a-crown.

It is not so much to relieve, as to remedy an evil. The first is temporary, and as such, may be useful in aiding a permanent cure. Ireland's appeal is to the world. England is deaf, and the church is recreant. From the world, relief must come—from America in particular, for no other has room for them. That is the country of her hope. Thither the starved and dying direct their glassy eyes, with as ardent devotion and hope as Jew ever prayed towards Jerusalem, or Moslem towards the tomb of his Prophet. Shall the gateways to our immeasurable prairies, so beautiful in their wildness, and so productive under the poorest cultivation, be shut against them, and they be left to famish under the yoke of the oppressor ?

We must not object because they are poor, and ignorant, and superstitious. These are reasons why we should receive and adopt them, that we may do them good. We wish they were better, wiser, neater, more enterprising, and less suspicious. They are not, and the choice is to take them as they are, with the hope that they will forget their country and their habits, and become naturalized by *coming up* to our standard, without trying to drag us down to theirs ; or else to leave them here, to fester in their own corruptions. We regret that they are so reluctant to make the proper change ; that they cluster about the narrow lanes and purlieus of our cities, instead of dashing off into our new country, like the Germans, to improve waste land which will repay them well, and make them rich. But, trained as they have been, and treated as they are, little can be expected of them. They know no better, and too few seem disposed to teach them. There is nothing systematical in their emigration. They have no matured plan ; no distinct object, farther than to get “ till Amiryky.” They speak of it as dying men speak of going to heaven—believing the battle will be fought and the victory won when they get there, and a feast of fat things in preparation for them. They are directed by instinct, more like birds of passage than by well informed judgment, like men of reason.

We passed along a narrow street, bordered by low, dirty houses ; the front rooms used for meat stalls, as well as for fish and vegetable markets. They were open, and, here and there, were suspended quarters of lamb, pieces of veal, while standing about were baskets of fish, some potatoes and turnips, and any quantity of young cabbage. In the same room with the marketing were the family, beds and domestic utensils—what there were of them—scattered about the floor. Many persons were standing about, conversing, but none appeared to be purchasing meat or other articles. Continuing our ramble we saw, what is no uncommon thing, pigs eating from troughs, in the rooms where the family *stayed*—they could hardly be said to *live*—called in there for protection against the large and more greedy swine squealing outside. In one street, numerous specimens of this kind of house-keeping were exhibited, all possessing the same general characteristics of poverty and social degradation.

We stepped into one of the Catholic chapels. The introductory service was over, and a brother was addressing the few in attendance on the subject of education. His remarks were excellent. He said a great majority of the common people, above fifteen, can neither read nor

write ; few women can read their prayers. This is wrong. Their condition can never be improved so long as things remain so ; the people must be taught ; the children must all go to school, if they do nothing else—and much more to the same effect. He enforced his remarks as one having authority, with powerful appeals to their sense of duty ; an augury of better times. I felt relieved. The sermon removed an oppressive burthen from my mind. I have wondered the pulpit—such a powerful engine, especially in the hands of the Catholic clergy—has not been devoted to the popular good. I know there is a great responsibility resting upon those who are believed to speak by authority from heaven, and who are obeyed without inquiry ; but I feared they had not done their duty. The exhortations and commands of that friar proved that all are not unaware of one of the causes of their country's disgrace.

He was pleading for the parish school, and alluded somewhat severely to the national schools. I regretted that, but still rejoiced on the whole, for knowledge in any form is better than ignorance. Could Ireland enjoy, for a single generation, the common schools of some of our states, free from sectarian influence, and open to all classes, a complete revolution would follow, in all the affairs and prospects of that country. It may be the fear of this that prevents their establishment.

Leaving the church, we strolled down the main street, which is wide and handsome, lined with stores and dwellings, many of which were large and elegant, along the margin of the canal, whose sides are of hewn stone, to the little village of Blennerville—the part of Tralee from which the smaller class of vessels pass up ; the larger ones, owing to a lack of water, remaining at anchor in the haven, a mile or so distant. From the bridge, at the head of this inlet, is spread out a scene of rare beauty and richness.

Several schooners were coming up the bay in the light breeze of the evening, whose white canvas contrasted finely with the heathery hills beyond. Quite a company had collected from the town, along the shore, to enjoy the tranquillity and beauty of the setting sun. They appeared orderly, social, and happy. Judging from them, and all that could there be seen, one would never suppose there were such pictures of wretchedness as I have described, so near at hand. How little does the cheerful or painted countenance tell of the canker that is gnawing at the vitals. The hectic cheek makes the consumptive appear beautiful to the unpractised eye.

We returned to the town through a long, narrow street of low huts, in which the pigs were eating, as before described, the inmates silting in the same room, and the little children playing about with apparent familiarity. Not far off is the old castle of the Desmonds, one of the powerful families so famed in the feuds which formerly distracted this part of Ireland, during the time of the McCarthys, O'Sullivans, and O'Donoghues. On the overthrow of that family, the town, castle, and surrounding lands were bestowed, as a royal gift, upon the family of Sir Edward Denny, from whom it has descended to the present proprietor, who has changed the castle into an elegant mansion, and derives a vast income from the lease of lots, and other privileges, which have quadrupled within a few years past.

Passing a large church, of modern erection, we stepped in to listen to the evening service, which had already commenced. A woman, serving as sexton, conducted us to a seat. The building is in the form of a cross, and very spacious. Not more than seventy-five persons were in attendance, though fifteen hundred could be accommodated comfortably. The preacher, well dressed in silk surplice, delivered a sermon, devoted to the explication of the hackneyed doctrine of “ Election and Free-will,” which he left as he found it. He argued that “ a free and full salvation has been offered, and is made possible for the world, for all men :—whosoever will, may have it—the gospel is adapted to man's fallen nature—but man can do nothing of himself ;—all is of grace—God does every thing—man can not help God, he can not help

himself, for St. Paul says to the Gallatians, “ If ye do part, and God does part, Christ is become of none effect to you, his promise is vain.”

These expressions I noted at the time, and commented upon them as I went home, thinking of the old sick woman, I had seen in the street, and a hundred men or more, standing along the middle of it with spades in their hands, like a company of raw soldiers on drill, waiting to be engaged the next day. What can these people know or care about the abstractions and figments of creeds ? and how are they benefited by such kind of preaching ? They already act, and talk as if they believed they were driven into their desperate condition by a fatal necessity, against which it is useless to contend, and from the miseries and disabilities of which, there is no deliverance by any effort of their own. After begging most urgently, and presenting their wrongs and sufferings, in the most pathetic manner, they will always attach a supplementary expression of their faith, that “ it is the will of God,” and submission is their only duty.

The expounder of English state-religion, might have been correct, or he might not, in his peculiar views ; but one thing is quite certain, that all such preaching will avail little for the relief and regeneration of Ireland, without a large mixture of those simple truths, and duties so frequently and forcibly inculcated in the teachings of the New Testament, but so much neglected in modern preaching. It is a cause of much regret, that the pulpit should be so constantly devoted to the discussion of disputed points of theology, which have been argued by the ablest minds, for centuries, with no nearer approach to any thing like a satisfactory adjustment of the difficulties, than in the days of St. Athanasius, Luther, and Calvin ; while the weightier matters of religion, which relate to the immediate wants and ability of the sinful, and suffering, are most woefully neglected. The cry is for immediate relief, for practical knowledge, for counsel and comfort, under present and pressing necessities. And, if there is any virtue in the system adopted by the “ Friend of Sinners,” and pursued by his faithful Apostles, this good can not be obtained without first entering into subtle and ambiguous arguments, and disquisitions, upon the abstruse subjects of theology, or attempting to settle every point in controversy. It is worse than living a course of lectures on anatomy over a man with a leg-out-of-joint ; or a treatise on dentistry to a man with a tooth-ache.

Better is it, in my humble apprehension, to follow out the suggestions of benevolence, to engage, at once, in those works which will afford present relief, and qualify the mind to receive and appreciate new and profounder truths, and estimate more fully the principles of good action. “ If any man will do *his will*, he shall know of the doctrine.” All Christendom is agitated with bickerings of sects and parties, about forms and dogmas, to no profit ; while the people die for lack of knowledge. Political interference has been invoked, and the power of state has often been prostituted to the regulation of matters of opinion, for which a man is responsible to God only. The consequence of all this is seen in the condition of the people, wherever such control is attempted. And the oldest and most powerful sects give the saddest exhibitions of their abuse of power and privilege.

Behold Italy ; or sit here at my window, and look out from the “ Royal Hibernia Hotel,” upon that crowd of ragged, dirty, ignorant men, who are collected in the market place, on this beautiful Sunday evening, with their implements of husbandry, anxious to be engaged for tomorrow, at the starving rate of a 6d. a day, which they must earn or starve.

See those women in tattered garments, with haggard faces, and that gang of smutty children, with bare legs, and half-naked bodies, crawling about like a race of inferior beings, more degraded in their appearance, and less cared for than the negroes of Georgia. Think of that houseless family before described, and then tell me what these churches are doing to

remove the curse from this land ; what good comes from the discussion of the doctrines of divine sovereignty, human agency, apostolic succession, and such opinions as divide and distract the church, alienate the hearts of kindred, and array one portion of community against the other.

What do these people know or care—what *can* they know about these metaphysical and ecclesiastical questions ? They are more concerned about “ praties” than dogmas, and would give more for a pot of “ stir-a-bout,” than for all the creeds from Athanasius down to Jo. Smith. Their wants are immediate and pressing. They have neither time, taste, nor talent, to think about such matters. They need most, the hand of some good shepherd, to feed and comfort them, to lead them into green pastures, and beside still waters, some voice to plead their cause in the counsels of the nation, to procure the removal of the grievous burdens, under which so many stagger and fall, and all the land groans in bondage. They need the devotion of an Oberlin, who shall teach their children to read, and their men to work.

“ TO WORK ?” What work is there for them to do ? They are willing and anxious to work, fourteen hours a day for a 6d. and at any kind of service. But this is denied them. There is no chance for an Oberlin in Ireland. They can not till the sides of these rocky hills, lest they disturb the cherished deer of a London sportsman ; they must not root out a single bramble or bunch of heather, to plant a hill of potatoes, lest they scare the rabbits of the *noble* proprietor, who is, perhaps, a lordly, sporting prelate of the church !

There is a *work* the church can do, to which every true christian ought to lend a helping hand. These people can be instructed to read and write ; to keep themselves clean, to —— I can not finish this sentence, I see so many difficulties rising up, one after another, each succeeding one more formidable than the last, that, like these depressed creatures, I yield in despair. How can these people keep clean in their floorless, smoky hovels ? Their naked feet tread upon the cold ground, and they have neither chairs nor bedsteads. Teach them industry ! They have no chance to exercise such functions, if acquired. *Submission* is the only practical lesson they can understand. Of that they have a most perfect apprehension. If there is any virtue in that, the poor Irish are the most virtuous people on earth ; for extremest lessons have been given them, and they maintain the same dogged stupidity, hugging the fetters which enslave them, till death or expatriation releases their grasp, and sets them free.

But here is another subject for reflection. The chambermaid has just come into our room to light our candles, and arrange our beds. She is a sturdy, decently dressed girl of twenty, or twenty-five. We engaged her in conversation, that we might learn something of the condition of this class of people. She seemed quite intelligent, and answered frankly all the questions we asked her. She said she did all the chamber-work and washing, finding the soap and candles for the rooms, for £6 a year, (\$30) and the “ chances,” some £2 more. She also boarded herself, except her dinner, which was given her at the hotel. Her “ chances,” some days, amounted to two or three shillings, but frequently she got nothing, for, unless the travelers gave it to her directly, she rarely ever received any thing. She was, therefore obliged to keep watch and see when they were about to leave, or else she was pretty sure to fail, as they would either give nothing, or the chief servant, or the keeper would keep all.

This system of hotel-keeping is exceedingly annoying. A man pays his bill—all that is demanded for every item he has had—and when about to leave, the waiter demands a fee, and, if no one is about, takes for himself, the chambermaid, and “ boots ;” and if he is not off at once, the chambermaid will be at him, and boots will follow him to the coach-office and become clamorous, refusing to believe that the chief-waiter has already received his portion. The servants have no confidence in each other. They have their grades, and poor boots being

lowest, is always the most suspicious and clamorous. If he finds a traveler has left and given nothing, he will chase him, and plead and threaten in behalf of both the others, and whatever he gets he will keep to himself, be it much or little. To him it is lawful plunder. This is all wrong, and the source of much unpleasantness to the traveler, especially to one who has not been accustomed to such a system of exactions.

The usual charges are higher than we pay at home, and then comes this beggary on the score of right—a demand for services rendered. The natives complain of this evil as much as Americans, but they understand better how to get along at a cheap rate, and without trouble. Another reason is, the poor people think Americans are not only rich, but generous, and as we are obliged to enter our names and residences on the books of the clerk, the servants at once begin to “calculate their chances.” They set the price high, and are not willing to be disappointed. Necessity knows no law. Their poverty urges them to press their demands as long as there is a “chance” left, in utter defiance of all rules of justice and decorum.

It is half-past ten, though still light. All is quiet in the streets. The moon shines softly, and casts the shadows of the buildings along the streets. I hear the solemn tramp of the lone policeman, which sounds dolefully to a spirit, saddened, like mine, by the scenes of the past day. What a Sabbath this has been ! I have gazed on the richest beauties of nature—the lofty, rugged mountains, piled carelessly together, reft with many a gorge and glen ; upon the deep, tangled wild-wood, bordering the rocky shores of the quiet lakes ; upon the charming green fields and flower-gardens, and shaded walks ; upon the palaces of the nobles, the low mud hovels of the poor ; the ruins of abbeys, castles, and convents ; upon the grotesque masses assembled for the worship of a common Father, the Maker of all, in the name of the one Master and Savior, “who tasted death for every man :” upon the new manifestations of pride, struggling in the midst of poverty, oppression, and famine, to rear a gorgeous temple made with hands ; upon whole families—decrepit age, and helpless infancy—houseless, friendless, foodless, and in tatters, by the way-side, ready to die of hunger and cold, in the midst of wealth, fashion, and professed piety ! What a world is this ! What scenes of horror, crime, and destitution are in it ! Crushed hearts, blasted hopes, hungry mouths, glazing eyes ! Oh, God, thou Merciful and Just, look down, at this silent hour, and deal gently with those still sleepless from pain, anxiety, or famine, and give protection to all. Hast thou no deliverance from these wrongs and miseries, so deep, so bitter, so vast, so ocean-like ? Shall thy children, the work of thine own hands, be for ever wronged, cheated, abused by sin, the foul deceiver and despoiler of the world ? Is there no virtue in the Cross ?—no power of goodness left to conquer, redeem, and reconcile to the wise, and holy, and benevolent institutions of thy righteous government ? Lift, then, the heavy cloud of error ; dispel the darkness of unbelief. and give Faith to the children of men. So shall thy laws be obeyed, and thy name be honored on the earth.

Ireland, as I saw it : the character, condition, and prospects of the people (1850)

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