

## The Saxon in Ireland

THE IRISH QUARTERLY REVIEW.

No. II.— JUNE, 1851.

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“The Saxon in Ireland” is not an ordinary book, nor is it one of the common tourist in Ireland pieces of ignorant absurdity, with which we have, from time to time, been inundated. From the period when the knights of, we believe, Richard the Second, pulled the beards of the Irish chiefs, and “chaffed” the loyal kerns who waited on the king, to the advent of Mr. Thackeray, who discovered that the aristocracy of Dublin is an aristocracy of brass plates, and that the broken windows of the villas on the Kingstown road are repaired with old flannel petticoats, English tourists in Ireland have poked fun at us, like the knights of King Richard—or misrepresented us as Mr. Thackeray—or expressed a pitying anxiety, a gentle compassion for us, as if we were Hottentots or Bosjesmans—or lamented over our idolatry, and ignorance, and dirt. Grave, oily gentlemen in white cravats, and above the vanity of shirt collars, and with, as Roger North would say, “an amiable gravity of manner, and countenance always florid,” have recommended that our civilization should be attempted by means of those inestimable tracts, “Crumbs of Comfort for Chickens of Grace,” and our religious habits and physical condition, purified and cleansed, by the potent agency of scriptural and pictorial moral pocket-handkerchiefs. However, our “Saxon in Ireland” is not of this class; he dedicates his work to the Earl of Devon, “whose great practical knowledge, extensive influence, and untiring energies, have ever been devoted to the best interest of Ireland;” and his Preface states, that—

“The design of the work is, to direct the attention of persons looking out either for investments or for new settlements, to the vast capabilities of the sister island, and to induce such to visit it and to judge for themselves. Were the unfortunate prejudices against Ireland, founded as they are, for the most part, in ignorance, once removed, men would surely pause ere they crossed the broad Atlantic in search of a new field for the employment of capital, or the profitable exercise of their intelligence and industry.”

Bravo, Saxon! you are the man for us. Come yourself—indeed you are here already—but get your countrymen to come by scores, there is room enough for all: waste lands to be rendered fertile—mountains to be tilled—marshes to be drained—fisheries to be cared: all these, Saxon, are ours; they are all open to you, and mineral wealth, too, such as California never can know. Stand, Saxon, upon the side of Corannalinn; look around upon the glorious panorama of lake and mountain, of plain and river, of bright sky and fathomless deep blue ocean. Stand upon the summit of Slieve-na-Mon, and gaze down upon the broad bosoms of three fair counties—Waterford, Tipperary, and Kilkenny; mark the Suir—Spencer’s—“Shure”

“The gentle Shure, that, making way  
By sweet Clonmell, adorns rich Waterford.”

See it winding like a silver serpent, away and away, till lost amongst the ships of Waterford. There, Saxon, there before you, in these fair counties, that, as you call it, “merciful measure,” the Incumbered Estates Act, has been at work; and farms, large and small estates, moderate and princely, can be obtained by your fellow-Saxons, who “will pause before they cross the broad Atlantic in search of a new field for the employment of capital, or the profitable exercise of their intelligence and industry.” Aye, Saxon, the old proprietors have passed; their sons may wear out life in the forests of the far west; or their shouts may be the loudest,

and their feet the first upon the breach in every battle field of the world—they have passed away forever ; and your people, the pioneers of civilization, will, if they be wise, leave Port Natal to its fate ; let those who will, take care of Adelaide ; but here in Ireland is the surest return to be found for capital judiciously expended. Our wish is, that you may succeed ; our advice is, go in at once, as if you ment to win. We Irishmen at last have learned that we must work if we would live. We have been always willing to work, but were not satisfied to do it for a profit-less pastime. We now feel the truth of wise Sydney Smith's words—" What trash to be bawling in the streets about the Green Isle—the Isle of the Ocean—the bold anthem of *Erin go bragh !* A far better anthem would be, *Erin go bread and cheese—Erin go cabins that will keep out the rain—Erin go pantaloons without holes in them.*" [1] Teach your fellow-Saxons this, and make them know us as we are. You have a wise head, a ready pen, and, we believe, honest intentions. Let the country of your adoption be as dear as that of your birth ; and when the green grass of Ireland shall wave above your grave, men will say, here rests a benefactor of his country.

The Saxon tells us, with the preacher—" I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do ; and behold ! all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun." He was about to leave the dwelling of his youth, and was, with his wife, and his friend the curate, considering the most desirable settlement upon which to pitch his tent. He had been driven by circumstances " to emigrate." He thought of Canada, the Cape, New Zealand, Australia ; but the curate—God bless that curate ! we say ; he must have much of Dr. Primrose in his nature—pishes ! at them all, and says,

" What do you think of Ireland ? Good land—healthy climate, estates to be had cheap." " Oh, my friend", replied I, ' worse than all. Only think of the midnight attacks of armed ruffians—the abduction of females—the lifting of cattle—forcible detention of crops—denunciations from the altar, and consequent murder. No, no ; all this is too shocking to think of.' "

And the curate says —

" I have always observed that there is a pre-eminence given to anything that can criminate or depress unhappy Ireland, which does not extend to other countries, in themselves perhaps equally wretched and guilty. One would almost think that it was the interest of some parties there to magnify atrocities and to multiply offences. There is scarcely a broken head at a fact-ion fight which is not paraded in print, that it may rouse Saxon indignation, and be salved over by Saxon sympathy."

Just so ; the curate is right ; all Ireland's faults are exaggerated into crimes, her crimes into hellish atrocities. The unfortunate Saxon had saturated his mind with English accounts of Irish crimes. He thought that Irish courtships were managed according to the ancient etiquette of Romnulos ; that every man looking for a wife was a Sir Henry Hayes, and every young lady a Miss Pike ; and that Mr. Whiteside, or some other Curran of our day, was perpetually convulsing juries with eloquent descriptions of abducted maidens. We have no doubt whatever but that the Saxon, poor fellow ! supposed that Dr. Mac Hale, like his namesake, the immortal Larry, [2] was in the habit of parading the country, armed with a flail instead of a crozier ; and that Dr. Whateley could not take the air upon the Donnybrook road, unless guarded by minor canons and rural deans. But the curate knew better; for he tells the Saxon—

" One great misfortune to Ireland has been, that the English seldom take the trouble to acquaint themselves with her real condition, or with what is excellent and useful in the character of her people. They are so much accustomed to look at the dark side of the matter,

that the very existence of a bright side scarcely entered into their conceptions. The public mind, however, is awakening from this delusion ; and a few years will witness great changes.”

The Saxon resolved to take a look at Ireland before making up his mind about a sail to the Cape, and began to read all manner of works about Ireland and the Irish. He found “ its whole history was one sad romance—the impatient struggles of a turbulent but generous people with a series of ignorant and oppressive governments. He lamented that “ such a country—so near our shores, so connected with us by every tie—should be alien, if not hostile—a drag upon our prosperity—a perplexity to all governments, a help to none.” At length the Saxon resolved to start for the far west—of Connemara, and promised to write regularly to the curate an account of his proceedings, and to give the impressions of the moment just as they arose.

He arrived in Dublin safely, and did not make Mr. Thackeray’s discovery about the brass plate aristocracy, or that our hotel windows were kept open by the support of a hearth-brush. He admires our public buildings, but disapproves of our beggars and dirt ; and we forgive him this dispraise—first, because it is just ; and secondly, because he has not tried to be witty. But indeed the time has passed when the English tourist thought it a matter of course to write about Dublin with a grin upon his Saxon countenance. Everybody remembers the lady tourist of the old time, when it was the fashion to sail up to Rings-*end*. She said (referring to the sand-banks in the harbour, and the name of the, landing-place) that she “ entered Dublin between two bulls and a blunder.” Our Saxon takes the train to Mullingar, of which line, and the carriages, he approves very much, and soon arrives at Galway, of which he writes—

“ For the purposes of commerce, internal and external, Galway has few rivals in this or any other country. In the south it possesses one of the finest bays in the world, offering a nearer communication with the continent of America ; on the north it will shortly communicate, by means of abroad canal, with the expansive waters of Lough Corrib ; and after a second canal is finished, by Corrib, into Lough Mask, there will be opened into the interior of the country a still-water navigation of nearly forty miles in length ; and thousands of acres of fertile land, hitherto almost unproductive, will be brought into contiguity with good markets. Lough Corrib is twenty-seven miles long, and covers nearly 50,000 statute acres ; it contains numerous fertile islands, and a coast sixty miles in extent. Lough Mask, with the smaller Lough Carra, covers about 25,000 acres, and is in length about ten miles.”

It must be remembered that the Saxon came here, not as a tourist in search of the picturesque, but as a man seeking a home wherein, by the expenditure of his capital, and labour, and skill, he might one day hope to enrich himself. He therefore looks on all the land about him with a practical eye, and of the flat district about Lough Corrib and the Menlo Bog he writes, having examined the district on account of its lying very near Galway—

“ The low flat, close upon the lake, is so full of quagmires and holes, and presents so little fall for the water, that one glance satisfies the eye as to its want of capability ; but more to the west improvable portions appear. On the upper grounds, or slopes, any quantity of good limestone gravel may be procured ; and, with proper draining and banking, these lands may be converted into productive meadow. It is a remarkable fact, that nature appears to have pointed out, and indeed assisted materially, the capability of these extensive wastes for cultivation. At convenient distances, long ridges of limestone gravel will frequently occur, which being applied as a surface-dressing to the peat, produces an almost immediate beneficial effect. One method of applying this gravel is ingenious, particularly on the flat wet lands. It is as follows ;—Take a level line from one bank to the other ; along this line cut a canal in the bog, about three feet deep, in which, filled with water from the surrounding bog, a flat boat may

be used ; and this, with the assistance of parallel canals, will convey gravel from the banks to every part of the intervening land.”

But although the Saxon found the country near Galway thus far good and promising, he did not think it exactly the spot to suit him. He goes into the question of the geological statistics of the locality ; and to those interested in the capabilities of the district we can recommend this portion of the book. Sea-weed is found in abundance along the shores. The inland parts abound with limestone strata, granite, sand-stone, &c ; but the reader wishing to understand the subject in all its bearings must consult the very carefully drawn map of the author’s route, attached to the volume ; with it, and the latter part of the first chapter, the subject will be made plain “ to the meanest capacity.” The Saxon continued his journey to Clifden, and there he saw that the Commissioners for the Sale of Incumbered Estates had been at work. Mr. D’Arcy, the owner of the greater part of the place, and the master of its castle, had, from various causes, become embarrassed in circumstances, and receivers had been applied for and appointed over the property. We are not about to enter into particulars, but Mr. D’Arcy found that the protection and power which the law gives to the receiver was, in his case, either misused or non-used ; for at the period of the sale in the Incumbered Estates Court, there were due by the tenants eight years’ arrears. We think, even upon the facts stated by the Saxon himself, that it is plain Mr. D’Arcy did, like Lord Kingston, invest too much money in bricks and mortar, and attempted too great changes, and too many improvements ; and that from these improvements no fair return for the capital expended could be reasonably looked for. Mr. D’Arcy, he says, “ found the place a morass ; he left it a lovely Oasis amid the desert which still surrounds it.” Truly, he did find it a desert, and a howling one, too. In “ The Industrial Resources of Ireland,” Sir Robert Kane states, that “ The town of Clifden, and the surrounding country, were, in 1815, in such a state of seclusion, that they contributed no revenue whatever to the state ; and up to 1822, the agriculture was so imperfect, that scarcely a stone of oats could be got. In 1836, Clifden had become an export town, having sent out 800 tons of oats ; and it produced to the revenue, annually, £7,000.”

The Saxon passes from Clifden by various desirable spots ; he sees many places by the way which promise well ; he finds the landlords, in some cases, willing to aid the tenants, and doing it too ; in other instances, he discovers that they are either unable or unwilling to assist the poorer classes. The Marquis of Sligo, and other resident landlords, he hears, are doing all the good in their power to the people ; but still he observes in many, nay, in most places, the signs of neglect or apathy. At Westport he hears again of the good character of the Marquis of Sligo, and that he is willing to grant such loans as will enable men of “ enterprise and capital to do well, even in the face of all present discouragements.” He thinks that his countrymen should look to Ireland before they think of more distant lands, as purchases can be made here at prices little more than those demanded in Australia or Canada. He says—

“ At each step I take in this land, so highly favoured by nature, my ideas of its desirableness and capabilities increase ; and I look with wonder at the general state of neglect and poverty in which some of the finest and most beautiful districts in these kingdoms are suffered to remain. Nationally speaking, the Irish are neither deficient in talent nor in industry. During my progress I have met with a larger average of well-informed, intelligent persons than I have met with even in my own country.”

Bravo again, Saxon ! Nothing is said more about the murders or abductions. The Saxon is just discovering that if the Irish have tails, they possess also the art of concealing them very well ; and he also finds that really we are as intelligent as even the English. He continues :—

“ I heard universal regret expressed by the inhabitants of all grades that the English had not bought up the Martin estates. ‘ All we want,’ said an intelligent man, whom I met at

Flynn's, near Ballinahinch, 'all we want is English capital and English spirit, and,' he added most earnestly, 'English *justice*, so that a poor man may get a fair day's wages for a fair day's work.' And this, indeed, seems the great evil of the country : the proprietors, as a body, seem to have little or no money, and therefore the people have no work." "If the estates are generally under mortgage, and so overweighted with incumbrances of various kinds, that the nominal possessor is incapable of performing those positive duties, which by the laws of God are inseparable from the possession of the soil, the state must interfere ; proprietors so situated must change hands, and the labouring population rescued from a state of misery and degradation, which, as it exists in this country, certainly has no parallel. This was the wise view taken by the present Government, when they passed the Incumbered Estates Act ; and a more politic, or more merciful measure, it is impossible to conceive."

No doubt of it, Saxon, the Incumbered Estates Act was a *merciful* measure to *Ireland* : to the proprietors it was a violent legalized robbery. First, Free Trade half ruins the agricultural population of Ireland, and then the Incumbered Estates Act completes the destruction : Even the author before us, who has no sympathy with or for the Irish landlords, writes of the Free Trade measure, and its tail-piece, the Incumbered Estates Act :—

"Some of the most zealous improvers that Ireland ever possessed, particularly in the west, having exhausted their means, and raised money on their properties, under the conviction that remunerative prices would continue, find themselves at once engulfed in the common ruin, without any fault of theirs. Their estates are sold at less than half their supposed value, and they are turned adrift, with their families, ruined and destitute. It certainly appears a harsh policy ; time must prove how far it has been a wise one. The landowners complain also, that these continued changes in the law damp all enterprise ; that they are thus debarred, as prudent men, from improving their estates ; that they are afraid to give employment to the poor, lest the outlay may never be returned to them ; that time should have been given to them to set their houses in order ; and that it was unjust at one blow to increase their burdens, and decrease their receipts."

We know that a section of the community has no right to complain of that which is done for the general good ; and for this reason we agree with the Saxon—the Act was a "merciful measure." We think, too, that he is right in his views of the position of landlord and tenant in Ireland. The tenant has had no fixity of tenure—the landlord has been tied up by old rules and principles of law ; the tenant has been sometimes oppressed, and has in turn sorely oppressed his landlord by roguish cunning. For our parts, we believe that he who can suggest a fair law of land-lord and tenant for Ireland will be the best benefactor to the kingdom it has seen since Alfred. We do not mean a law throwing all the power into the hands of the landlord ; we do not contemplate a plundering project, designed to deprive the landlord of his natural and reasonable right of ownership, and which only knaves can plan, and confiding fools support, but a law just and fair to all. It is impossible to conceive how tenants, treated as some of those in the west and south have been, could work with hope or cheerfulness ; they were serfs, rack-rented slaves, dragging out a weary life ; in no way removed from the class of whom Pliny, the naturalist, wrote, "*Coli rura ab ergastulis pessimum est ; et quicquid agitur à desperantibus.*" [3]

But whilst we write thus, we quite agree with the Saxon, who states :—

"It strikes me that the Tenant-right cry is absurd in all its bearings, if it *blinks the landlord's rights*. If the legislature must interfere at all, which is, I conceive, both unnecessary and impolitic, it should protect the landlord as well as the tenant. The instances of injury inflicted on landlords are far more numerous than those inflicted on tenants ; and this remark I extend to England, and vouch for its truth from my own experience. In a majority of cases, farms are given up to the landlords in a worse state than the tenants took them ; and the process of

recovering damages in these cases is so tedious and so hazardous, that the proprietor had rather submit to the loss than spend money in procuring that redress which the out-going tenant cannot, perhaps, or will not, after all, afford to pay. In Ireland, at present, the real value of a property consists in the paucity of its tenants ; a property without any tenants at all affords some hope of ultimate improvement, by the allocation of a different class of men, *on very different terms*, or in the personal occupation of the proprietor.”

The Saxon passed upon his way ; and still keeping one eye upon the productive valleys, and another upon the beauties of nature, and having, moreover, a little of Yorick in his disposition, and believing that the sentimental traveller alone meets with adventure, he turns from the contemplation of green crops, thorough draining, and subsoil ploughing, and is lost with “ lakerish” admiration at the beauties of the fine old Abbey of Cong.

The Saxon having out-staid his intended time in Ireland, returns to his own country, having resolved to sell his stock and interest in England, and then to come back once more to Ireland, and settle here for life. He accordingly starts for home, and meets that honest-hearted curate (we hope he may yet be a bishop, full of piety and learning, Greek roots and Hebrew points), and the Saxon tells him :—

“ I do not hesitate to confess that Ireland, in the fertility of its soil, the kindness and hospitality of its people, and the beauty of its scenery, has far surpassed my expectations. I am decidedly of opinion, too, that fortune, respectability, and happiness may be found even there. ‘ I never doubted it,’ said the curate ; ‘ and felt well assured that your absurd English prejudices (pardon me) would speedily wear away, when you saw with your own eyes, and used your own judgment. Let a few English families cluster together, purchase, or take on lease, estates in the same neighbourhood, hold together, mutually assisting each other, keeping the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, as the Apostle advises, acting kindly and *justly* to the inhabitants, eschewing politics, not meddling with the religion of others, but quietly practising their own ; I repeat, let emigrant families act thus, and I, for one, would prefer green Erin as a settlement to any country on the globe. And why not ? Are sensible men to be scared with the interested exaggerations of unpatriotic speakers and writers, who would gladly drive industry and civilization from their native shores, in order to serve their own purposes ? Are the Irish worse than John Heki, and other native chiefs ?—or, are they more relentless than the Caffres, or the red Indians, or the Cannibals of North Australia ? In nine cases out of ten their crimes, deep and fearful as they are, have sprung from the sense of injury, and from the heartless system under which they live—or rather under which they starve. These days of injustice and crime are passing, though slowly, away, and the time is approaching when Ireland must and will be in the strictest union with her sister island ; when the same laws, the same usages, the same language, the same feelings, will prevail in both ; and when——‘ And when,’ said I, interrupting him, ‘ the curse of absenteeism will cease, since the power of steam has almost annihilated distance, and now brings the Irish proprietor within a few hours’ journey of the Irish metropolis.’ ‘ True,’ continued the curate, ‘ *the effects of this facility of intercourse will soon be felt*. As yet the Englishman lingers, hesitates, hugs his old prejudices ; but the bolder few are already at work ; they are silently, and most advantageously, purchasing lands and houses ; they see the horizon clearing away after the long storm ; and they and their descendants will, no doubt, reap a plenteous harvest. Gradually others will follow, till I verily believe Ireland will be the fashion, as Scotland has lately been ; and everybody rushing that way will wonder why they delayed so long.’ I smiled at my friend’s enthusiasm, but felt there was much of probability and truth in his rhapsody.”

The Saxon returned to Ireland, and again started for the west. On this occasion he went by Edgeworthstown to Castlebar. Of Castlebar no man can say much. It was the headquarters of the French, under Humbert, in 1798, and in 1850, its anti-pay poor-rate population furnished the almost sole employment to the Court of Common Pleas, in the pleasant days of Chief

Justice Doherty, and jocular idleness. Of Lord Lucan he writes in high commendation. We regret our space will not permit a lengthened extract from this very carefully written chapter ; but the concluding portion is as follows, and shows to a certain extent the result of his lordship's bold experiment :—

“ I was informed that altogether Lord Lucan had little less than 10,000 acres in hands ; and, as leases fell in, the vacant farms undergo the same process, in order to secure for the future a different description of tenant. The mode of treatment seems to be generally as follows :—The surface is pared and burned, the ashes spread, potatoes dibbled in rows, without other manure. The ensuing crop of oats is dressed with stable dung, or guano, which can be procured from Liverpool at about £11 per ton. With the oats, they lay down the grass seeds—viz., to the acre, 1½ bushel of perennial rye grass, 6lbs. of red clover, and 9lbs. of white clover, or honeysuckle. Five hundred acres, I was informed, have been thus laid down last year ! The Holm Farm is about 3,000 acres, and employs thirty working bullocks, and twenty-six horses. One sixth part of this is bog, but under gradual reclamation. About thirty acres were reclaimed last year. Ballymacragh is also in hand—a farm of about 350 acres, situate on Lough Sannagh, two miles on the Westport road. This also is undergoing the process of laying down ; and this year thirty-six acres were completed. I merely enter into these imperfect details to show you what is even now being effected against bad times, and ruinously low prices. Lord Lucan has no fewer than seven stewards or over-lookers, upon these and other farms in hand ; and there is a regular office at his residence, near Castlebar, where all the accounts are weekly handed in, examined, and passed. His lordship does not, I believe, let his farms for a longer period than twenty-one years ; which, though at present prices probably a prudent plan, yet will, I fear, affect the ready disposal of them. This, however, is really a desirable country to settle in ; there is much good land, a near market, and an abundance of caustic or burnt lime at from fivepence to sevenpence a barrel, or, what will be more intelligible to English ears, half-a-crown for as much as one horse will draw. Many cattle also are bred on Lord Lucan's estates here, principally short-horns. Galloways, and Ayrshires. They are kept till three years old, and then, for the most part, shipped for England. The dairy consists of about one hundred cows. Twelve or thirteen tons of cheese are annually made and sold ; and the butter is packed in firkins, and fetches about eightpence per pound of sixteen ounces. Some of the cheese I tasted at a gentleman's house, and I found it quite equal in quality to the best single Glo'ster.”

That we may not detain our readers too long with thoughts or suggestions of our own, we pass over the interesting notes the Saxon has given of his further rambles, and we place our author by the side of another Saxon, a Mr. S——, who has settled in the far, far, west—Erris. We will not copy the Saxon's description of the wild beauties of Erris or Ballyenoy. Who has not read Osesar Otway's word painting ? Who has not lived and moved, in fancy, amongst the towering hills and sweet quiet lakes, followed the red deer, and felt his heart beat quicker, whilst revelling with poor Maxwell in the “ Wild Sports of the West ?” Mr. S., the Saxon's friend, was delighted with his adopted country. His wife and children were happy ; their mode of life was simple ; there are no Johnston's, or Todd and Burn's, or Pim's, in Erris. His crops were good, his methods of reclamation cheap, yet sure ; and all these blissful things together took the Saxon's fancy, and engaged his heart ; and so he resolved to become a settler at the nearest point to Mr. S. He made the resolve to purchase, reflecting that—

“ Ireland is very moderately taxed—not, however, that she could bear more than has been already put upon her ; tithe, cess, and poor's rates form the principal outgoings on land, exclusive of labour. The tithe, as far as I could judge from the inquiries I was enabled to make, is below the English average. The rate for the relief of the poor (a most merciful and necessary measure) has not, generally in Mayo, I believe, exceeded 5s. 10*d.* in the pound ; but then the Poor Law valuation is very much under the real value. Next year a decrease to 3s. is expected. Should English capital be brought in to any extent, the rates, I am convinced,

would soon be the merest trifle. Upon my English property the taxation, or rather the outgoings, are fearful. Before I can look either for interest upon the capital employed, or profit from my exertions, I have nearly 12s. per acre to pay in outgoings of various kinds. These consist of fines and quit-rents to the Lord of the Manor ; road rates, church rates, poor's rates, county rates, land tax, income and property tax, assessed taxes ; and though last not least, from 5s. to 7s. per acre by the tithe composition, which, being calculated on averages, will for some years press most heavily upon the already overwhelmed agriculturist. Add to these the many calls upon private charity ; the public subscriptions, which a man cannot put aside without odium ; the relatively high scale of wages, which, nevertheless, ought not to be reduced ; the continual wear and tear of implements ; the long blacksmith's bill ; and the various perquisites to servants and labourers, which, allowed in more prosperous days, cannot now be discontinued without murmurs and dissatisfaction. From the greater portion of this ruinous pressure Ireland is free ; while her labour is fifty per cent, cheaper, and her soil equally if not more fertile. In Natal land costs £1 5s. per acre, on other settlements still more ; in Ireland good reclaimable land can be got cheaper.

‘ O fortunatos nimium, sua si bona norint,  
Agricolas !’

With these convictions upon his mind it cannot be a matter of astonishment that the Saxon should very soon start for Dublin, where, from that most learned and polite of auctioneers, Baron Richards, he purchases the reclaimable Eden upon which he means to live and die. It overlooks Tulloghan Bay.

“ It contains 845 acres. At present only 12 are arable ; 326 tolerably enclosed meadow and pasture ; the remainder is in part black bog, about two or three feet deep, on a substratum of clay and gravel, and high land, occupying the centre of a lofty knoll, an offset of the adjoining mountain. Half way up the southern side of this green hill is a beautiful spring, which, bursting copiously from the rock, even at this dry season, promises abundance of excellent water for all purposes.”

Thus the Saxon is at length settled in Ireland, with a pleasant, hopeful spirit—hopeful for himself, and full of hope for poor Ireland. We wish, wish most ardently, that his hopes may be fulfilled, and his wishes accomplished. He is a true-hearted Saxon—a genuine man, with honest intentions. We know not whether he may be considered as looking too brightly upon the future prospects of our country ; it is, in our minds, no small thing to discover a man who even hopes good for her ; but here is one who expects it. He writes—

“ That trade is languishing—that enterprise is at a stand-still—that men's hearts are failing them—that everything is, in fact, retrograding at present, common observation must convince any one that will form an impartial judgment. But let them be patient for a while. The ample resources, the immense capabilities of the Sister Isle, are beginning to attract observation in England ; and I cannot but venture what some may call a rash prediction, that *Ireland has seen her poorest days.*”

We hope so too. Let the Minister, be he Whig or Tory, treat us fairly ; let him enable our poor to live by honest industry—by reclaiming wastes and improving our harbours ; and, having done this, let him give the children of our poor the crowning blessing of education, and all must be well with Ireland. It is absurd to talk of education, whilst the mass of the labouring and artizan classes are plunged in poverty. It is stated that the weavers of Macclesfield have collected amongst themselves the large sum of £300, towards getting up a library and opening a park in their town. Could this be done—could it have entered for a moment into their thoughts, had they been in the miserable condition of the Irish artizans ? We never hear the wise project started, of ameliorating the state of the Irish poor by means of



education alone, but the speaker recalls to our minds the scene in Congreve's "Love for Love," in which Valentine counsels his hungry servant, Jeremy—"Read, read, sirrah ! and refine your appetite. Learn to live upon instruction ; feast your mind, and mortify your flesh ; read, and take your nourishment in at eyes ; shut up your mouth, and chew the cud of understanding. So Epictetus advises." [4] And we speculate upon the probability of Seneca's being able to preserve his equanimity, or of Plato's having written the Phædo, had his diet consisted of half quantities of Indian meal or very watery Swedish turnips. And yet, poor and hungry as Paddy and Pautheen, or little Paddy, have been, the National Schools have worked well ; and we refer with pride to the following extract from Mr. Porter's work "The Progress of the Nation," p. 708 :—

"In 1834, the number of schools under the National system was 789, and the number of children attending amounted to 107,042. In 1846, the schools were 3,637, and children attending 456,410. In 1847, the woful famine year, the schools were 3,825, but the children had fallen to 402,632. In 1849, the schools "were 4,321, and the children attending amounted to 480,623." Mr. Porter states—"No one who has witnessed the effects produced by these establishments in districts where they had not previously existed, needs to be told that their moral effects are not confined to the children by whom the schools are attended, but that an immediate and powerful influence is exercised by them over the parents also."

Ireland has gone through a frightful ordeal ; and when we recollect the dead thousands, the emigrant thousands, Poor-House-seeking thousands, and remember that all these thousands form millions lost to Ireland ; and when, too, we remember that, with all the misery of the time, her *crime* did not extend beyond its ordinary limits, surely one may hope that Almighty Goodness will reward this great endurance.

We think, with the Saxon, that Ireland has seen her worst days ; we know that she has within herself the elements of improvement, and all the beginnings of wealth ; we know, all thinking men must know, that but for the failure of the potato crop, this country would not be in its present position : there is already a well-defined and distinct prospect of improvement in all our exports.

"In 1832, the number of pigs shipped for Liverpool alone was 149,090 ; and for Bristol 85,619 ; and for Liverpool, in 1837, the number of pigs was 595,422, which, at 50s. each, the average value, gives £1,488,555. The value of the eggs sent from Ireland to Liverpool and Bristol is £100,000 per annum. In the year 1849, the total amount of grain and meal shipped from Ireland to Great Britain was 1,426,397 quarters ; and in the last mentioned year the number of vessels, including repeated voyages, was—to England, 8,607, with cargoes of 1,478,059 tonnage ; to Ireland, vessels, 18,000 ; cargoes 2,159,954 tons. The great difference between the clearances and the entries arises from the fact that the shipments to Ireland are more bulky than the receipts from Ireland, causing many ships to return to Great Britain in ballast, of which no account is taken ; whilst others, after discharging in Ireland, proceed thence on distant and foreign voyages." [5]

These figures show what we may yet, with fair play and justice, do. Mr. Porter writes—

"What is principally wanted towards ameliorating the physical condition of the working classes of Ireland is, a steady market for their labour. It was the want of certain employment which, until the establishment of the poor law, drove them of necessity into the system of hiring, each one for himself, one or two acres, or even a few roods of ground, at an exorbitant rent, as the only resource left against absolute starvation." [6]

And he continues —

“ It is calculated, that by draining and reclaiming bogs, about five millions of acres may be additionally brought into cultivation in Ireland, when the quantity of cultivated land would amount to 19,600,000 acres. If the proportionate number of labourers employed on this quantity of land were assimilated to the number employed in England, it would give occupation to about 605,000 labourers, being very far beyond one-half the number of male agricultural labourers of Ireland, as ascertained at the census of 1841. [7]

By Mr. Griffith's estimate, appended to Lord Devon's Report, it appears, that in Ireland there are waste lands, reclaimable for the spade and plough, 1,425,000 acres, and reclaimable for pasture, 2,330,000 acres. There are at present 326,084 occupiers of land, whose holdings vary from one acre to less than seven. Now, to consolidate those small holdings would require the removal of 192,368 families, and it is calculated that the first-class of improved waste lands would give these families eight acres each ; the first and second class together would give those families farms of twenty acres each. Further, it is computed that by those arrangements the 500,000 labourers, equivalent to two millions and a-half of the population, would be withdrawn from competition in the labour market. This fact alone is of great importance in a country over-run by a labourless population ; and another fact, which our brother Bull will at once be able to appreciate in all its force, is, that by the waste lands alone being brought into cultivation, an addition of £22,000,000 would be made to the gross produce of the country, and the first three or four years' crops would return the cost requisite to bring about this change. And Professor Davy, of the Royal Dublin Society, in his “ Essay on the use of peat or turf as a means of promoting the public health, and the agriculture of the United Kingdom,” states :—

“ That all the species of turf, of all colours, in all forms, solid, fibrous, friable, has the most powerful effects as a deoderising agent, and that those effects can be produced in the strongest manner, by simply separating the water from the turf which can be perfectly done by exposing it in dry weather to the heat of the sun, or by drying it by artificial heat, and reducing it to a fine powder. The powder can be shaken from some such case as a common flour dredging-box upon the most noxious animal or vegetable substance, which will become quite inodorous, and be changed into a manure quite equal to guano. There are 2,830,000 acres of turf or peat in Ireland ; and in the year 1845, 220,000 tons of guano were imported into the United Kingdom.”

These are facts worthy of being remembered—facts which prove this country to be one of the first in the universe in point of natural advantages. The concluding passage of the Saxon's book is worthy of the author : it is true, and just. He writes :—

“ Many persons are deterred from settling in Ireland in consequence of the violent religious discussions which are fostered and kept alive by teachers, whose religion enjoins them ‘ to live in peace.’ For my own part, I view these contests without the slightest anxiety as to the result. As I have already observed, they afford many strong arguments to schismatics and infidels, and destroy more souls, under the mask of a love of unity on one side, and a love of truth on the other, than all the writings of Tom Paine, or a Voltaire. But the growing spirit of the age is against all these anomalies and inconsistencies ; men's eyes are gradually opening to the difficulty, if not absurdity, of coercing the human mind, either in one way or the other. The settler in Ireland has nothing to do with these intemperate proceedings ; he will wisely stand aloof, and, whatever his creed may be, he will leave to others the enjoyment and benefit of their own opinions, and endeavour, by a quiet and consistent course, to prove the practical excellence of his own. For my own part, I feel there is nothing to fear in settling in this beautiful island. The people naturally are brave, generous, and polite ; they are grateful for the kind word, and *just act* ; they are ceasing to be so entirely the creatures of wild impulse ; and every passing day is bringing them more under the dominion of common sense

and right feeling. Education cannot now be stopped ; and it is to that, above all other things, we must look for the regeneration of Ireland.”

And, having met some “ Bible readers, he writes thus :—

“ We entered into conversation with these men. They did not pretend to much success at present ; nor could they say that the population received them gladly. The elder of the two (the younger was a mere stripling for so grave a purpose) was well read in his bible, had been sufficiently tutored in his points for argument or disputation, was fluent in speech, and well up to his business. His main object among the people, he said, was to wean their minds from all superstitious reverence to externals—to restore the sacraments of the church to their real spiritual signification—and, moreover, to denounce the system of Popery as a fraud. I did not, I must confess, entirely enter into all his views ; he seemed to me, in his endeavours to avoid one error, to be in danger of running into another. The violent protests of such men shock oftener than they convince. It is necessary to deal tenderly with prejudices, and fiery denunciations are more calculated to raise opposition and hatred, than to win men from error to the truth. I was afterwards informed that much excitement had been caused in the neighbourhood by these proceedings ; but to what extent they had succeeded in gaining real and conscientious converts to the Protestant church, I could not ascertain.”

Just so ; they make the people bad Catholics, and still worse Protestants. A clergyman of the diocese of Cashel tells us, that a short time since a man, who had become a Protestant, and attended church frequently with his family, was required to show his change of religion by receiving the sacrament : he attended the church on a certain Sunday ; when the wine was presented to him, the ruffian said to the clergyman—“ Your health, sir !” and, drinking the wine, walked out of the church, taking his family with him.

Thus, reader, we conclude.

[1] Rev. Sydney Smith’s Works, vol. 3, p. 466.

[2] Lever’s “ Charles O’Malley”—

“ His favourite weapon was always a flail ;  
Faith I wish you could see how he’d empty a fair,  
For he handled it nately, ould Larry MacHale.”

[3] Lib. 18.

[4] By the way, why does not Sheridan Knowles, or Calcraft, a man of undoubted taste, and who has so ably and learnedly defended the stage ; or Planche, the prince of adapters, prepare one or two of Congreve’s comedies for the modern stage ? His plays would, no doubt, require careful arrangement to suit the present day. We are now so virtuous and proper, that nothing suits us but straight-laced propriety and—POSES PLASTIQUES.

[5] Porter’s “ Progress of the Nation,” p. 342.

[6] “ Progress of the Nation,” p. 306. [7] Ibid. p. 308.

The Irish Quarterly Review (1851)

Publisher : W.B. Kelly

Year : 1851

Language : English

Digitizing sponsor : Google

Book from the collections of : New York Public Library

Collection : americana

Source : Internet Archive

<http://archive.org/details/irishquarterlyr10unkngoog>

Edited and uploaded to [www.aughty.org](http://www.aughty.org)

April 24 2013