

Irish Responsibility.

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Ireland.

A Tale.

Harriet Martineau

1832.

MR. TRACEY and his family returned from France about this time, in consequence of the passing of the Relief Bill. He had found, like many other gentlemen of station and fortune, that the disabilities under which he laboured on account of his religious belief, were too galling to be borne in the presence of those who were ready on all occasions to taunt him with his incapacity ; and, like many other gentlemen, he returned, as soon as established in his civil rights, to discharge the offices which he had committed to others during his absence, or from which he had hitherto been excluded.

He was shocked and terrified at the aspect of his estate and of the neighbouring country. When he gave orders for the consolidation of the small farms, he imagined that he had done all that was necessary to secure the prosperity of his tenantry ; and as Mr. Flanagan had not troubled him with any complaints from the ejected, he supposed all had gone right as far as he was concerned, and that the troubles in the neighbourhood, of which report spoke, had an origin for which he was in no way responsible. When he found that the disaffected were those from whose hands he had wrenched the means of subsistence, and that his remaining tenantry dared not for their lives enter upon the new farms,—when he heard of the acts of malice and depredation which had been committed, of the lives lost, of the prisoners taken, of the utter destruction of confidence between the upper class and the lower in his neighbourhood, and remembered how large a share he had had in doing all this mischief,—his first impulse was to go abroad again, and get out of sight of his own work : but his friend, Mr. Rosso, roused him to a better course.

The first thing to be done was to find subsistence for those who had been ejected. To settle them as before would have been mending the case but little. The great evil of over-population was to be guarded against, at all events. Mr. Tracey could not afford to give these people the means of emigrating with advantage ; but it appeared to himself and his friend that if he afforded them the opportunity of earning these means, without taking work out of the hands of any already employed, he would be making the best atonement now possible for the errors of his management. This might be done by beginning some work which would improve the estate ; and there was little difficulty in deciding what this work should be. A certain fishing village lay at a short distance from the southern extremity of Mr. Tracey's estate ; but from the state of an intervening piece of land, little or no communication was held between this village and any of the places which lay to the north or east of it. This piece of ground was level, and almost perpetually overflowed, at some seasons by the tide, and at others by land springs. During a hot summer, the health of those who lived within a certain distance was affected by the taint the marsh gave to the atmosphere ; and by reason of the manifold evils which might be referred to this slip of land, it had obtained the name of the Devil's Garden. It had long been settled that a sea wall of small extent, and a road and ditch would put an end to the fever, would establish an advantageous communication with the village, and probably

convert this desert tract into good land : but the consent of a neighbour or two had not yet been obtained, because not asked in earnest.

Mr. Tracey now asked in earnest and obtained. In a short time his purpose was made known, and candidates for emigration (to whom the offer of employment was confined) dropped in from all quarters, and established their claim as old tenants or labourers on Mr. Tracey's estate. No questions were asked as to their mode of subsistence during their disappearance. The object was to win as many as possible from a life of violence to one of hopeful industry, and this object was gradually attained. Less was heard of crime and punishment, week by week ; and at length Mr. Tracey had the satisfaction of knowing that several individuals among these labourers had resisted various inducements both of promises and threats to become whiteboys.

“ What is the meaning of their tickets ?” inquired Mr. Rosso, one evening, when the people went to the paymaster on leaving work, and Mr. Tracey and his friend stood by to observe the proceeding.

“ These tickets are certificates of a day's work being done. The men carry them to the clerk yonder, who pays them what they absolutely want for present subsistence, and places the rest to their account in the emigration list. They are getting on in the world, I assure you, by this plan ; and seem in a fair way to emigrate in a better condition than our poor countrymen usually do.”

“ What, while earning only tenpence a day ?”

“ Yes ; you must remember that if these wages are less than half what would be earned in England at the same employment, the people may live for as much less in proportion. A man who earns six shillings a week here is as well off, in his own opinion, as one who gains fifteen shillings a week in England. An English labourer would find it impossible to leave any part of his daily tenpence in his landlord's hands ; but a friend of mine, who gave no more, was paid 4000*l.* of arrears by his tenants, when he set them to work on improvements of great magnitude on his estate. My project of enabling these people to emigrate, seems nothing in comparison to his.”

“ What a pity it seems, Tracey, that our people should emigrate when there is so much to be done at home,—so many bogs to be drained,—so much fertile land to be tilled ! But so it must be. We want capital ; and though our capital is growing, we must limit the demands upon it before we can materially improve the condition of the people.”

“ True,” replied Mr. Tracey ; “ some of them will do better abroad till we have learned to manage our resources more wisely. We may talk as we please about the fertility of our waste lands, and the facilities for draining our bogs ; these cannot be made productive without capital ; and we have not capital to spare for such purposes, while the present enormous demands are made upon the subsistence fund by our overgrown population.”

“ If the deficiency be of capital, Tracey, what think you of those who carry Irish capital abroad ? What think you of the patriotism of absentees ? if one who has till now been an absentee will tolerate such a question.”

“ I think that an Irishman who loves his country will do all he can to promote the increase and judicious application of capital in it : but this has nothing to do with the common question of absenteeism. Our absentees do not usually apply capital, but spend revenue in other

countries ; which alters the question entirely ; it being perfectly immaterial in point of wealth to Ireland whether her landlords are supported by Irish produce abroad or at home.”

“ Aye ; I have heard that this was your plea for living abroad so long.”

“ It was an opinion which satisfied my conscience in remaining abroad when I was driven there by evils which are now remedied. If I had not been satisfied that it is an error to suppose that a country is impoverished in proportion to the absence of its landlords, I would have borne my exclusion from all offices but that of sub-sheriff, and the obloquy with which our Protestant gentry are apt to treat us true Irish, rather than budge a step to the injury of the people. I am speaking now of a landlord’s economical, not his moral influence, you are aware.”

“ Certainly. The moral effect of a landlord’s residence depends much on the man and his way of life. If he is a profligate, or brings down profligates in his service into the country, he may do a world of harm ; and the contrary, if he and his household bear an opposite character. A really good agent, too, may exert as favourable a moral influence as a good landlord ; and as for what a bad one can do, we need but look round and see what are the results of Flanagan’s administration. But, in an economical point of view, do you suppose that the entire difference between doing harm and no harm by absenteeism consists in applying capital and spending revenue ?”

“ I do, as regards the whole of Ireland. See now. My agent collects my rents : shall we say in raw produce, or in money ?”

“ Both : raw produce first.”

“ Very well. He sends me over to Paris five hundred head of cattle, which I exchange for French produce to be consumed within the year. Now, how does it matter to Ireland whether I exchange these cattle for something of the same value to be consumed there, or whether I consume the cattle at Paris ?”

“ It cannot matter at all. If Ireland kept the cattle, she would have the same amount less of something else.”

“ To be sure. I am still living on Irish produce, whether at Paris or in this glen. With a money-rent the case would be precisely the same. If I remained at home, Ireland would have more money and less of the money’s worth.”

“ That is clear enough. But how would it be if you fixed your revenue, instead of immediately consuming it ?”

“ If I consumed only a part of my revenue and employed the rest in setting up a manufactory, Ireland would remain in the same state as if I consumed the whole ; and in a worse state than if I set up my manufactory within her borders. If I withdrew any of my capital from her to support my manufactory abroad, I should inflict on her a positive injury. But absentees never do this. When Irishmen invest capital abroad, it is as emigrants, not as absentees.”

“ Suppose, instead of setting up a manufactory, you built a mansion in France, how would the case stand then ?”

“ The mansion would be Irish property ; erected with Irish funds, consumed (as long as it

deteriorated) by an Irishman, and the remaining value to revert to Ireland at my death or at its sale.”

“ But supposing it to be let to French tenants for ever.”

“ Then it would be an investment of capital, and cease to bear any relation to the question of absenteeism.”

“ True, true. But it seems to me that there must be a vast difference between using your resources to put in motion Irish and French industry. Have not the French been gainers all this time, and the Irish losers, by your having employed French workmen ? Might not the profits of Irish work-people in your service have become substantial capital by this time, if you had staid at home ?”

“ Ireland has been as busy working for me all this time, Rosso, as if I had staid at home : not these my near neighbours, perhaps, but labourers of one kind or another. My revenue must first be spent here before my agent can get it for me to spend anywhere else. The only difference is that I myself might spend it in Irish bread, fish, milk, linen, &c., while he lays out exactly its equivalent in purchasing that which is to enable me to buy French bread, milk, fish, and linens ; whether that which he purchases be labour and raw material united in a manufacture, or raw material which is the result of labour.”

“ But the plain question is, after all, Tracey, whether you would have employed French labour if you had lived at home ?”

“ I should not, except in as far as I live on French wines ; of which you know I am very fond ; but at the same time, I supersede a portion of French labour by the produce of Irish labour which I introduce into France. Neither should I have employed more Irish labour at home than when abroad. The amount of Irish commodities which I should have consumed at home is exchanged against French commodities ; that is all. It seems to me, Rosso, that since you feel perplexed about this, you must have the idea that this exchange is not an exchange of equivalents. Is not that what you are thinking of ? You should remember that an exchange which is advantageous to individuals on account of convenience, &c. is a mere exchange of equivalents as regards the country at large. The baker gains by exchanging some of his loaves for broad-cloth ; but the same amount of wealth remains in the country as before. In like manner, it is a convenience to me to have my rents in money rather than cattle ; but it is the same thing to Ireland whether I receive my revenue in the one form or the other.”

“ True : give me a case. Show me the effect of sending your revenue to Paris through England.”

“ Very well. Suppose the state of the exchange, or anything else, renders it undesirable to send me money ; my agent sends cattle into England to be exchanged for something more convenient to me. Well ; Ireland is minus my year’s consumption, just as if I had been there during the year. The cattle is exchanged for Sheffield and Manchester goods, which are to be sent to France. Thus England is in the same state as if I had remained in London, using nothing but hardware and cottons. France gains nothing by me, for I consume precisely as much food, clothing and habitation as I give of knives and gingham. And the case would be the same if my rents travelled round the world.”

“ Is the outcry against absentees, then, so very senseless ?”

“ As far as regards the total wealth of a country, I certainly conceive it to be so, much as the residence of any one landlord may affect the locality where his capital resides. I may create a good deal of bustle about me by settling down here ; but some other class of producers will have less to do than when I was abroad. Ireland is neither richer nor poorer for my return.”

“ Yet it is a common remark that bare fields and broken fences on the one hand, or thriving estates on the other, show at a glance whether the proprietor is an absentee or a resident.”

“ Aye : but we forget that the industry of the resident proprietor’s tenantry may be called into action by the wants of the absentee. Their produce finds its way to him through the market in the shape of bills of exchange which represent his revenue.”

“ Nothing can be clearer. I see it all now. The coin which the tenants pay purchases produce which is sent to the foreign country ; and the bills of exchange drawn by the exporter, and made payable for the Irish produce exported, are the form in which the absentee receives his rent : so that Ireland sells one kind of produce to the foreign market instead of an equal value of other kinds to the absentee.”

“ Exactly so. Now, how can it signify to Ireland where he eats his beef, as long as he derives it from his own country ? ”

“ It cannot signify to the country at large, certainly. You have confirmed me in the opinion I have long held of the injustice of an absentee tax, for which so many are clamouring.”

“ To be applied for the benefit of the poor, I suppose. It seems to me the last thing in the world likely to do any real good. You see the whole revenue of an absentee is first spent at home. Any part withdrawn as a tax would be so much diverted from its natural course, for the sake of being arbitrarily applied. It would only affect the distribution of capital, not its amount ; and we all know that a natural distribution is more favourable to the welfare of a country than an arbitrary one.—As a stigma upon absentees, it would be unjust in a high degree ; and as throwing an unequal burden upon them, intolerably oppressive.”

“ One pretence is that absentees contribute nothing to our domestic taxes : but the objectors forget what taxes he is liable to as a proprietor of land and houses, and what he pays on the materials of manufactures.”

“ And if he ought to be still further liable, Rosso, let it be done in any way but that which assumes to repair an injury done to his country by his leaving her. There are many ways of levying a tax on income or property which would affect him ; and thus let him pay, if his own government is jealous of his assisting to support that of France or of Italy ; and if, moreover, it overlooks the stimulus given by the absentee to exchanges and manufactures. Suppose an absentee should ere long be honoured as a benefactor to his country.”

“ In Scotland the estates of absentees are considered in a better condition on the whole than those of residents ; and the reverse is not always the case here, Tracey.”

“ Well : we will not decide the question any further than to agree that the prosperity of an estate depends mainly on the qualities of the manager, be he landlord or be he agent. As for the prevailing prejudice respecting absenteeism, it may be trusted to go straight forward into the gulf of oblivion, if we all help to point out its way thither. Pity it is too late to atone to a host of absentees for the undeserved censure which has been cast upon them.”

“ If undeserved : but, Tracey, do you suppose they have most of them thought much about their country’s good before they left her ?”

“ God forbid that we should judge their motives !” said Tracey. “ I answer for none but myself. I did thoroughly convince myself before I set out that I should not injure my country by going. Many, I doubt not, have been driven away by political wrongs, either directly inflicted on themselves, or inciting the peasantry to hostility against their landlords ; and many more, probably, have hastened abroad to get out of sight of misery which they could not relieve. If I were to venture on judging my neighbour at all in these instances, it should not be the absentee, but the government ; whose evil policy prompted to absenteeism.”

“ Well : instead of judging, let us anticipate, since the past cannot be helped, and the future may be bettered.”

“ That is what I try to comfort myself with saying,” replied Tracey, looking round with a sigh on his half-ruined estate and ragged corps of labourers. “ Let others try, like me, to remember the past only as a warning ; and let government do with the country as I am doing with my little corner of it. Let capital be well secured and well husbanded, in order that it may circulate with more confidence and become more abundant. Let the people be more wisely distributed over the surface, and let their surplus be carried where labour is wanted. Let all usurpers of unjust authority, all who make the law odious, and justice a mockery, be displaced from office as I have, displaced Flanagan. Above all, let education be abundantly given, so as to afford us hope that the people may in time understand that their interests are cared for ; and that men who differ in religion and politics may find it possible to live in fellowship, like ourselves, friend Rosso.”

“ Like ourselves, friend Tracey,” replied Rosso ; “ and then farewell to all Catholic oaths to wade knee-deep in Orange blood, and to all Protestant likenings of the pope and his flock to the devil and his crew.”

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Irish Impolicy.

THE friendship between these gentlemen proved of no little advantage to their neighbours when an occasion presently arose for their co-operation for the good of their parish.

News reached Mr. Rosso’s ears one day that a strange gentleman was on a visit at the house of a Protestant in the next parish, who had a field or two in the glen, just advertised for sale. It was immediately conjectured that the gentleman came as a purchaser of this land ; but it was not till it had been repeatedly surveyed and measured that any gossip could ascertain what he meant to do with it. In due time, however, it transpired that the stranger was a builder, and that he was making his estimates for erecting a church.

Mr. Rosso’s measures were immediately taken. He sent to the proper quarters memorials of the facts that he and his household, consisting of fifteen persons, were the only Protestants in the parish ; that they stood in no need of a church, that of the neighbouring parish being nearer their dwelling than the field on which the new one was proposed to be erected ; and that ecclesiastical burdens already weighed so heavily on a miserably poor population, that it would be absolute ruin to many to tax them further. Moreover, Mr. Rosso sent a pressing invitation to Mr. Orme, the incumbent, to take up his abode with him for a week. Mr. Orme had not appeared in his parish for some years ; and there was hope that what he might now see

would influence him to avert the dreadful infliction of a church where there were no church-goers. Mr. Tracey prepared Father Glenny for friendly intercourse with his heretic brother pastor ; and all parties agreed that, if Mr. Orme should prove the reasonable and kind-hearted man he was reported to be, a further appeal should be made to him on the subject of his tithes.

Mr. Orme came, and, before he went to rest the first night, was convinced by ocular demonstration that his host's dining-room could conveniently contain the entire Protestant population of the parish. The next morning, he was seen standing with the priest on the ridge which overlooked the glen, and heard to sigh over its aspect of desolation.

“Whereabouts would you have your church erected ?” quietly asked Father Glenny.

“Indeed, I know little more than you,” replied the clergyman. “I have not been consulted upon the matter in regular form, and had no idea it had gone so far. I fear it is a job, sir.”

“The architect happens to have his hands empty of contracts at present, perhaps,” observed the priest : “and the owner of the field may hope to gain a higher price for his land through the agency of your church than direct from our poor neighbours. But look round you, and find out, if you can, where the parish is to obtain means to answer such a call upon its resources.”

“It is indeed a different place from what I once remember it, though it had never much wealth to boast of. When I occasionally lodged here, it was in farmhouses where there was good food and sufficient clothing, and sometimes a pretty dowry for the daughters on their marriage day. I see no such places now. These hovels are but the ruins of them.”

“Too true ; and we preserve but the ruins of some of our former practices. Dowries are rare among the brides of this parish. Our old folks are less hopeful, our young ones less patient than formerly ; and marriages are therefore rashly entered into without a provision of any kind.”

“I am sorry, very sorry for it, sir. There is more benefit than is at once apparent in the long preparation of the marriage provision. I have heard much ridicule of the old Scotch practice of accumulating a stock of linen for bed and board, which could scarcely be consumed in a lifetime ; but there was much good in it. Besides the benefit to the parties concerned,—the industry and forethought it obliged them to exercise, and the resources it put in their power,—the custom proved an important check upon population. Young people had to wait two or three years before they married ; and where this was universally the case, it was thought no hardship. Those who thus began their married life were never known to become paupers. But, sir, from the aspect of this place, I should imagine your entire flock to be paupers, except a tenant or two yonder.”

“The land is exhausted, Mr. Orme, and the people are therefore poverty-stricken and reckless. There is little encouragement to prudence while there are superiors to keep a rapacious hand in every man's pocket, and appropriate whatever he may chance to gain beyond that which will support life. We know such to be the results in Turkey, Mr. Orme, and in other seats of despotic government, and why not here ?”

“Whom do you point at as these superiors ?” inquired Mr. Orme. “Not either of the landlords, surely. And you are free, moreover, from the locust-like devastation of the poor-law system.”

“ True : but what pauperism leaves, the middlemen consume ; and what the middlemen leave, the tithe-proctor consumes. Yonder field, sir, has been let out of tillage because the tithe devoured the profits. That row of hovels is deserted because your proctor seized all that rendered them habitable. Their inmates are gone where they may live by plunder, since the law of this district is to plunder or be plundered.”

“ Plundered !” exclaimed Mr. Orme. “ That is a somewhat harsh term, sir.”

“ Is it an unjust one, Mr. Orme ?—that is the question. What do these poor people gain in return for the portion of their earnings wrenched from them in the form of tithes ? What does the Protestant church do for these Catholic tithepayers ?”

Mr. Orme could only reply that the Protestant church was established for the good of the people at large ; and that it was the people’s own fault if they would not take advantage of the ministrations of its clergy. He was ready, for one, to do duty as soon as his flock would listen to him ; and, in the meanwhile, he conceived that he was causing no wrong to any man by receiving the means of subsistence decreed him by law. He would not defend the mode of payment by tithe in any country, or under any circumstances. He saw its evils as an impediment to improvements in agriculture, and as an unequal tax, falling the most heavily on the most industrious cultivator ; but while payment by tithe was the method appointed by law, he could not allow that its exaction deserved the name of plunder.”

“ With or without law,” observed Father Glenny, “ it appears to me plunder to force payment for offered services, which are not only declined but regarded with dislike or contempt : in which light we know the services of the Protestant clergy are justly or unjustly regarded by our Catholic population. If you, sir, were a pastor in the Vaudois, and your flock under the dominion of some Catholic power, could you see one deprived of his only blanket, and another of his last loaf of bread, and a third of his sole portion of his field-crop, for the maintenance of a clergy whom they never saw, and not call it plunder, let the law stand as it might ? And could you acknowledge your people to be justly charged with disaffection if they looked with an unfriendly eye on the priestly agent of this robbery, and muttered deep curses against his employer ?”

No answer being returned, the priest invited his companion into certain of the dwellings near.

“ To be looked on with an unfriendly eye ?” asked Mr. Orme, smiling bitterly. “ To be greeted with deep curses ?”

“ By no means, sir. I question whether an individual whom we shall meet will know the pastor of his parish. If you keep your own counsel, you may see things as they are. If you have courage, you may hear by what means your 400*l.* a-year has been levied.”

“ I will ; on condition that you will allow me to speak as plainly to you on your relation to the people as you have spoken on mine. Will you bear with my rebukes in your turn ?”

“ I will,” replied the priest, “ when I have finished my say. Do you conceive it just and merciful to Ireland that she should support four archbishoprics, and eighteen bishoprics, the total number of her Protestants being smaller than in certain single dioceses in England ?”

“ Certainly not. I have long advocated a reduction of our establishment. I would go so

far as to make the four archbishoprics maintain the whole, which would strike off at once 100,000*l.* a-year from the revenues of the church. I would go farther, sir ; and this will, I hope, prove to you that I am not one of the locust-tribe to which you would assign me. I would commute the tithes for lands, in order to avoid the individual oppression of which the people complain.”

Father Glenny observed that he did not wonder the plan of commutation was rising into favour now that it was found impossible to collect tithes in the old method : but the nation might be found as impracticable respecting one mode of paying tithes as another ; and he wished to know what was to be done in case of its declining the commutation proposed.

“ The plan must be enforced,” replied Mr. Orme ; “ and, moreover, the arrears must be recovered by the strong arm of the law.”

“ Whence can they be obtained ?” asked Father Glenny. “ How are you to compel the cottier who consumes his scanty crop, season by season, to pay the collected tithe-dues of several ? I say nothing of the danger to yourselves and your families,—danger to life and property,—of enforcing your claim. I say nothing now of the violence which must attend upon such an effort. I merely ask whence the arrears are to be obtained in an impoverished country ?”

“ They must be converted into a government debt. By this means, the nation will learn the real disposition of the government towards its own ecclesiastical servants and those who refuse them their lawful rights. By this means, the consent of my brethren at large to a commutation of tithes will be most easily obtained. Yes ; the arrears of tithe must be converted into a government debt.”

“ By this means,” replied the priest, “ the burden will be imposed where it is not due. Our cottiers cannot pay ; and you would therefore have their richer neighbours discharge their arrears :—a vicarious obligation of a new kind !—No ! this will scarcely be tolerated, believe me. You will carry neither of your points ;—neither the payment of arrears nor commutation ; the people having discovered a method of evading the payment entirely. Better waive your claim altogether, Mr. Orme, while there is yet time to do it with a good grace, or you will have the same trouble about tithe cattle that multitudes of your brethren have. You will pound them in vain ; attempt in vain to sell them ; carry them over the sea in vain ; and find too late that all you have gained is the name of oppressor.”

Mr. Orme muttered that it was a very hard case.

“ Who can help it ?” inquired the priest. “ If the subsistence-fund was not ample enough to afford tithes when due, in a poor district like this, how should it discharge an accumulation of debt ? Here we have many more people, very little more capital, less industry, less forethought than when the debt was contracted. All the constituents of the subsistence-fund have become more or less debased, and yet you would tax it more heavily than ever. You must fail in your object, sir.”

“ I will learn the truth for myself, instead of taking the assertion of any man whatever,” replied Mr. Orme, moving onwards towards a cluster of dwellings, into which he was introduced as a friend by the priest, and not therefore suspected of being the clergyman of the parish. All that he heard told the same tale ; all that he saw confirmed it. The new church was spoken of in terms of execration, in which the parson and the proctor largely shared. One woman told how the wealthy churchman was living far away from his cure, subsisting his

dogs on the food snatched from her children's mouths ; and another showed where her son lay buried, having been smitten with fever in consequence of his useless over-toil to satisfy the demands of the rapacious agents of the law. Others pointed with moody mirth to their desolated dwellings, as affording a sign that the legal spoilers were not far off. Others observed that there would be few conversions to the Protestant faith in the parish, while the clergy snatched the loaves and fishes from the multitude instead of bestowing them. Yet more exhibited their uncomplaining poverty in their looks and dress rather than by words ; and only gazed round their little tenements in perplexity at the mention of the dues that must be paid.

Mr. Orme had hitherto been a prejudiced man on the subject of his own rights ; but he was open to conviction, and at length roused to ascertain the truth of his own case. He spent the whole of this day and the next in rendering himself acquainted with the condition of the people, and used no reserve with Father Glenny respecting the impression made upon his mind. Towards the conclusion of his investigation, he stopped short, and ended a long pause by exclaiming,

“ I do not see how it is to be done ! Setting aside all considerations of law and justice, I do not see the possibility of obtaining my dues from these poor people.”

“ Nor I, Mr. Orme. What follows this conviction in your mind ?”

“ I scarcely know yet, further than that I shall give up my claim altogether, if, after a little consideration, I view the matter as I do now.”

“ Then you will prove, as I expected, a faithful servant of your church ; more heedful to her honour and usefulness than to your own peculiar gain.”

“ Reserve your praise, I advise you, sir, till you have heard me out. By giving up my claim altogether, I mean only while the people are in their present state. When the subsistence-fund improves, when industry and forethought thrive, the people will be again in a condition to pay tithe, and will perhaps,” he added, smiling, “ be my own flock, in allegiance as well as by destination, if Mr. Rosso and you continue your care of the school.”

“ I will try the venture with you,” replied the priest, smiling also. “ Let our respective faiths be tried by the increasing light of the people. If this is also your wish, you will dispossess my flock of the prejudices they entertain against your church on account of her oppressions.”

“ This reminds me,” said Mr. Orme, “ of what I have to say against your relations with your flock. How do you defend your own emoluments while you complain of mine ?”

Father Glenny, astonished, began to explain that he derived from his flock little more than would barely supply his wants. A hard couch, a frugal board, homely clothing, left him but a pittance with which to relieve the most pressing distress he encountered.

“ Of all this I am aware,” replied Mr. Orme. “ In these respects your lot resembles that of too many faithful servants of our church, who give their most strenuous exertions for a very poor worldly return. What I now complain of is not the amount of your recompense, but the mode in which it is levied. How can you in one hour lament those evils of the people's state which arise from the disproportion of their numbers to their means of subsistence, and in the

next, consent to receive your emoluments in a way which exposes you to the charge of encouraging an increase of numbers ?”

“ The charge is false,” replied the priest. “ My brethren and I do not make marriages, though we celebrate them with a view to the glory of God and the fulfilment of his holy commandment. We are supposed to know nothing of an intended marriage till requested to solemnize it ; and to refuse to discharge our office, with all the customs appertaining to it, would be to encourage sin.”

“ I lay no charge to the door of any one man among you,” replied Mr. Orme. “ I only observe that by receiving your emoluments chiefly in the shape of marriage fees, you expose yourselves to the suspicion of encouraging marriage ; a suspicion which is much strengthened by your emphatic approbation of such connexions as often as you solemnize them, and by your known tremendous power over the minds of your flocks, obtained through the practice of confession. Hear me out, my good sir. I am not about to enter upon any controversy respecting the diversities in our discharge of the clerical office. I would only recommend to you, if you wish to place yourselves above the suspicion I have alluded to, to separate your worldly interest altogether from this particular rite. Appoint any other way you may choose of receiving your dues ; but if you really believe your people to be prone to form imprudent marriages, if you are actually convinced that over-population is a principal cause of their distresses, remove from yourselves all temptation to connive at imprudent marriages and to sanction over-population : remove from the minds of your people all idea that they are gratifying and rewarding you by asking you to marry them ; cancel every relation between the wedding propensities of the young and the welfare of their priest’s purse.”

“ I agree with you,” replied the priest, “ that there is much that is objectionable in the modes in which we each receive our emoluments. You condemn tithes, and I condemn marriage fees, given as they are given now by the guests as well as the parties. The fee thus exposes us to the temptation and suspicion you speak of, without having the beneficial effect of obliging the young couple to save before they marry, like the Scotch ancient custom respecting house linen. It is for the state to remedy this evil by providing otherwise for us.”

Mr. Orme thought this was jumping to a conclusion in a terrible hurry. Why should not the same amount be given in a more judicious manner by the flock, instead of involving government at all in the matter ? This point was argued till both gentlemen decided that the only method by which the permanent prosperity of the people could be secured was the general diffusion of such knowledge as would make them judges of their own condition and controllers of their own destinies. The Protestant and Catholic perfectly agreed that to further the grand object of education, it was worth while to concede certain points which elsewhere each would have strenuously insisted on ; and that, should an impartial plan of general education be framed by government, it would be the duty, and would probably appear to be the disposition of all but a small minority of the factious and bigoted, to render hearty thanks for the boon, and all possible assistance towards the efficient working of the scheme.

“ If this should be done speedily,” observed the Protestant, “ I may live to be called hither to receive my dues in recompense of the services which I would fain render now, if the people would but receive them.”

“ If this be done speedily,” observed the Catholic, “ my brethren and I may live to see ourselves and our flocks no longer looked down upon by our scornful neighbours of your church as constituting a degraded caste. The law has at length emancipated us from our civil dis-

abilities it remains for education to lift us out of that worse and equally undeserved degradation whence the law cannot raise us up.”

The result of Mr. Orme’s survey of his parish,—made known after long deliberation on his part, much consultation with Mr. Rosso, and intimate intercourse with the people,—was, that he relinquished altogether his claim for tithes for the present, on the ground that it was impossible for the people to pay them.

All the endeavours of Father Glenny and his enlightened neighbours to make the people grateful for this concession were in vain. When they heard of the changes made by Mr. Orme’s family in their way of living, of the luxuries they surrendered, and the frugality they were obliged to exercise, the only remark was that these things had been fraudulently enjoyed thus long, as the nominal reward of services which had never been rendered. When reminded that the remission was an act of free grace on Mr. Orme’s part, they replied “ Thank him for nothing. He would never have got another pound of tithe in this parish, as he probably knows. He gives up only what he could not touch.”

When he rode away, ready to bestow kind looks on every side, he only met dubious smiles from those who gazed after him from field and cabin, and who observed to one another that it was a great blessing to have one priest for a guide, but rather too much to have another and a strange one on their backs. To wish him well away was the utmost extent of their courtesy.

From another quarter, however, Mr. Orme had thanks. The three gentlemen whom he left behind considered themselves beholden to him for the absence of the tumultuous excitement which elsewhere attended the useless endeavour to exact tithes. This parish was saved all opposition of forces between the “ loyal” and the “ disaffected ;” that is, between the oppressors and the oppressed. There was no need to cry out for the Insurrection Act on the one hand, or to threaten or perpetrate mischief on the other. The architect was seen no more. The field which he had surveyed bore oats instead of a church,—a happy circumstance ; since the people were much in want of food for the body, while they had enough of that for the spirit, and of the kind which they preferred, in Mr. Tracey’s chapel.

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