

LEIGH'S  
NEW POCKET ROAD-BOOK  
of  
IRELAND,  
CONTAINING An ACCOUNT OF  
ALL THE DIRECT AND CROSS ROADS;  
TOGETHER WITH  
*A Description of every Remarkable Place,*  
ITS CURIOSITIES, MANUFACTURES, COMMERCE, POPULATION, INNS,  
MAIL COACH ROUTES, FAIRS, AND MARKET-DAYS; FORMING  
A COMPLETE GUIDE TO EVERY OBJECT WORTHY OF  
ATTENTION.

Samuel Leigh

1835

•

Perhaps no country ever excited a more intense permanent interest than Ireland does with us. Of its population and its misery we have heard much ; much has been said of the causes of that misery, and not a little has been published on its fertility, its opportunities for commerce, the beauties of its scenery, and other advantages ; and yet it is acknowledged that the people of England really know nothing of Ireland. This proceeds from the partiality and extravagance of most accounts, which render it dangerous to receive information that it is so difficult to reduce to its real value : the want of judgment in almost every communicant has thwarted the great aim of patriotism and philosophy—Truth.

These remarks are principally applicable to those books which have too often been most read, because most puffed, whilst the more valuable testimony contained in the works of Young, Newnham, Townshend, Chichester, Wakefield, and others, and in the reports of the various Parliamentary Commissions, is confined to the few who are disposed to study cause and effect at the expense of much time and trouble. We hope, by reference to such sources, in addition to our own observations and experience, to arrive at sound conclusions, and to enable our countrymen to see, not only the real state of that island and its inhabitants ; but also the causes of that condition, and the means of improvement.

If from the entrance of Dublin Bay we cast the mind's eye over Ireland, we behold an extent of more than 20,000,000 English acres forming a vast tract of lowlands, girt by ridges of hill and mountain, and intersected by a belt of bogs that spread from near the capital to the shores of the Shannon, and beyond. The island thus contains about 18,000,000 English acres of cultivatable soil, and more than 2,300,000 of bog, with a population of 7,767,401.

The indented shores of Ireland have always been admired for the numerous spacious and secure refuges they afford from the raging tempest. Those to the eastward, and even those of the north and south, entertain a constant communication with Scotland and England ; the westward and southern harbours are particularly convenient for distant commerce across the Atlantic

The soil and climate of Ireland are peculiar, and peculiarly suited to each other. In almost every county, a light loam prevails on a rocky or calcareous substratum, and this soil is rendered fruitful by frequent and abundant rain ; sea-weed, and lime, which are both easily procured, constituting the principal part of the manure that a slovenly husbandry provides for its

renovation. These characteristics of soil and climate have, together with other causes, greatly tended to the universal cultivation of potatoes ; but with due management, every kind of grain can be advantageously raised there, as well as clover and the various grasses, apples and other fruits, &c. ; and it is almost unnecessary to say, that few places are so favourable for the growth of timber, particularly oak and ash ; and from the mildness of its climate, the arbutus, the rhododendron, and the magnolia, attain to great perfection ; the cultivation of flax has also long been successful. Such are the ascertained capabilities of the land. What it might produce under good management and judicious culture, in a state of quiet and confidence, and mutual emulation instead of restless jealousies, we can only determine by comparing the too general condition of poverty and dissatisfaction with the few instances to be met with of practical wisdom and forbearance ; of prudence and comfort. Such is the method we intend to pursue : to trace the general character of the country, and its inhabitants, of its institutions and habits ; and baring done this, to point out peculiarities and exceptions; and further, to enumerate various proposed means of improvement, with such remarks as we may think called for.

One of the great advantages that Ireland derives from a moist climate, counteracted by a suitable soil, is an abundance of good rivers and fine lakes. We shall, by and bye, have to comment on the opportunities they afford to improvement, and proceed to the general state of civilization.

If, standing on the pier of Dublin, we look around, we behold a magnificent city, exhibiting every thing that denotes wealth and prosperity : splendid public buildings, and elegant private residences, edifices raised and maintained by munificent charity, shops that dazzle with their splendour, and teem with every article that can minister to the comfort or luxury of the refined or the fastidious : glittering equipages, and all the distinctions of fashionable life abound, whilst the pier itself, and the ships that majestically sail past, seem to account for much of the wealth and bustle of the town. Its matchless custom-house, and its docks, attest the importance of its commerce, whilst in further proof thereof high along the coast, numerous villas, embedded in plantations, glitter in the sunshine.

Such is the first aspect of the capital of Ireland ; and, upon a nearer view, its hospitals, its college, the literary and scientific institutions it contains, and the brilliant vivacity of its society, seem to confirm the first impression. It is not till we become accustomed to the charms of the place, that we perceive the gloomy side of the picture ; that whilst the eastern portion of the town looks like the queen of a happy land, westward, the superabundant population of a wretched agricultural district, encroaches on the domain of pomp and luxury. The eager rolling eye and haggard scowl are as common in Church Street, Barrack Street, and the adjoining courts, as heedless mirth about College Green or Merrion Square. The extremes of levity, and abject suffering, are both to be found in Dublin.

Much of this is observable in every principal town along the coast of Ireland : Downpatrick, Waterford, Wexford, Cork, and Limerick, exhibit, in various proportions and degrees, the wealth and elegance consequent to commercial industry, contrasted with the despondence and excitement natural to ill-employed thousands. If there be any exceptions, Londonderry, and particularly Belfast, may claim the proud distinction.

The incongruous opposition of showy splendour, and debasing poverty, is indeed the most hideous feature in Irish society. In the large towns, where misery is attracted in search of the crumbs that lie beneath the board of extravagance, its consequences are most obvious ; but the same improvidence, the same destitution, are discernible, with few exceptions, throughout the island. The land proprietor anticipates his revenue—the middleman squeezes from the poor tenant the last farthing that the ground will afford, regardless of the deterioration of the estate ; and the labourer himself, should any fortunate chance put a pound or two in his way, will proceed, during the very time of harvest, to the coast, for the benefit of sea-bathing and

recreation: nor is it much better in small towns, since every petty dealer is eager to start his horse and build his villa. It is not to be doubted that this, like every other peculiarity of character, is at once an effect and a cause [1].

Besides this contrast of useless display and poverty, there is another very important contrast in the buoyancy of commercial enterprise, and the pressure from a wretched agricultural inertness. All experience proves that commerce is the great secondary cause of improvement and civilization; it is therefore through its commerce with Britain, and other parts, that Ireland must improve and flourish, and in proportion to that commerce will it flourish. But commerce, however fostered, can only extend in the exact proportion of the internal industry and produce. Let us therefore take a general survey of the agriculture of Ireland, and the condition of landlord and tenant.

It is acknowledged on all hands, that the agriculture of Ireland is far inferior to that of England and Scotland, although its capabilities are considered equal to the former, and greatly superior to the latter : the best counties are Tipperary, King's County, and Queen's County ; and next to these, Kildare, part of Meath, West Meath, Kilkenny, Louth, and Fermanagh ; but amongst the worst cultivated are, Londonderry, Donegal, Tyrone, and part of Antrim ; whilst, along the banks of the Shannon, in parts of Cork, and other spots, the natural richness of the pastures diverts them from the improved culture of grain ; nor is the cultivation of grasses, clover, or turnips, to any extent, attended to in Ireland. Singular instances of mismanagement are found in the county of Roscommon, where the ignorant practice of yoking horses by the tail still prevails occasionally ; or in Wicklow and Wexford, where economy is so little understood, that three men are often seen to one plough, one sitting on it to keep it steady, whilst another leads the horses ; nor can we forget that as much of the manure of the streets of Dublin as is not carried away by Scotch ships, for the fields of a more thrifty peasantry, is thrown into the Liffey as useless, notwithstanding so good a lesson from their more careful visitors. These and other instances of careless indifference are—the effects of an injurious system : they are found in Protestant as well as Catholic districts ; they are noticed generally near the abode of the resident gentry, as well as on the domain of the absentee : in some places the bad cultivation may proceed from utter poverty, in others it comes from absolute indifference ; but we believe that the principal cause depends on injudicious modes of letting the land, and we trust that some of the following remarks will be found as correct as they are new. Others, besides ourselves, have observed, that in some of the Protestant counties, agriculture is in a miserable state ; others have also noticed, that it is often most difficult to distinguish between the property of a resident and the estate of an absentee. We do not pretend that the comparative paucity of holidays of the Protestant may not give him some advantage over his Catholic neighbour, and we are quite sure that there are cases where the presence of a benevolent landlord might prevent cruelty and injustice ; but we are prepared to show, that most of those who reside on their estates are, to all real purposes, nearly as much absentees as they who flutter about St James's, or who dance in the salons of Paris ; that they have no immediate interest in the improvement of the estate, whilst, on the other hand, the tenant looks only to the produce of the season, heedless of ultimate consequences.

We need not look back to history for the origin of contending interests, and rival jealousies and antipathies, with which insecurity of property has always in past time been allied [2]. Without investigating the sources of injudicious systems in the letting of land, we proceed at once to the fact, that, almost without exception, lands have in Ireland been let on wrong principles, on conditions in every way calculated to lead to their deterioration and neglect. Leases for twenty-one years and a *life*, for thirty-one years and *three lives*, and so on, take all real interest from the proprietor, without giving to the cultivator an attachment to the soil. Should he plant, who will reap the benefits thereof ? If barns were built, and a durable drain-

age undertaken at his expense, all that remained at the end of the uncertain period of his lease, would be so much loss to his capital. Such terms are therefore not inviting to capitalists : it is, however, even worse, if possible, as regards the original proprietor : when, at his father's death he inherits, he discovers that the inheritance is not in his own hands, that others hold it on lease, not only for a number of years, but beyond that, for one or three lives. Should he be in the prime of youth, and sanguine in his expectations, he will live beyond his present income in hope of a change that may never happen ; others will either remove to a distant land, where they may boast of their property, or remain spectators of the mismanagement of the estate, over which they, have no control ; and, in all cases, they are rather pensioners than landlords. The lands being let to men who have no capital, and whose object is to obtain an existence from year to year, who, if hedges and fences decay, will repair them ? If a tree fall, who will plant another ? Who will supply the means of carrying out improved methods of husbandry, so as to keep pace with the skill of the age ? Can limited pensioners, and needy cultivators, maintain the expense of public works, or support the industry of an increasing population ? And if there be a check to industry, which is indeed the most precious of all commercial wealth, trade of every kind must be at a stand. We need not refer to facts to prove the truth of this in all relative proportions, but follow up some of the natural tendencies under such circumstances.

When an individual without capital obtains a lease of a considerable extent of land, however cheap he may have it, being unable to stock it, he is under an absolute necessity of re-letting ; and as others are in similar circumstances with himself, unless he divide it in proportion to their very narrow means, they must in turn let off what they cannot stock ; thus is a system of brokerage and interference established, middlemen becoming so deep one behind the other (the cultivator being answerable for each and for all), that security cannot be thought of; prudence gives way to reckless enjoyment of the present, as far as such a state of things can yield enjoyment [3].

Such is the simple working of the system from landlord to tenant ; but partly on account of the interference of the tithe proctor, and from various very natural causes, some middlemen, and even landlords, rather than not let the land at all, in the deficiency of capitalists, prefer letting out plots to several or many individuals, all bound for the amount of rent for each other. This system of partnership, under the name of con-acre, is spreading its baneful effects on all sides. In some cases the bargain is for a term of years, in others it is for the season, and not unfrequently the seed, as well as the manure, is supplied to the tenant. This system has been appropriately called “ a principle of exhaustion, but indispensable :” one that leaves the land unfit for any other purpose than building. Hence an increase of cottages and population to the utmost possible extent of food. Under this practice, the competition is “ incredible.” “ I do not know (said Mr. Clendinning, in his evidence, June 20th, 1833), whether I could name a sum that I would not be promised.” In many cases the sum agreed upon (from eight to fourteen pounds per Irish acre), is a full third or one-half more than can be obtained ; but this is winked at by the person who lets it, because it enables him to secure, not indeed the promised amount, but the last farthing that can be obtained. This is unfeeling, but not more unjust and oppressive than another practice which is gaining ground under the insidious mask of generous forbearance ; it consists in letting the tenant get into arrears of rent for six months, a year, or even two years : he is then a perfect slave. The worst effects of the con-acre system are—*1st*. That it prevents independent exertion, personal confidence and security, by making each dependant on others, and answerable for their negligence and delinquencies, rather than accountable for his own actions,—*2nd*. It encourages improvidence, and an improvident increase of the population ; and—*3rdly*. When once adopted, it can hardly be put an end to without creating such scenes of destitution and desperation as few can contemplate without horror ; for it can only be done by forcibly ejecting families, which, in leaving their wretched hovels, surrounded as they are by a superabundant population, verging on the same brink of

famine that they have fallen from, find no roof to shelter them from the storm—no spot of earth where a few potatoes may be reared to quiet the cravings of hunger ; whose only chance is to reach, at the end of a wearisome journey, by the help of precarious beggary, the abodes of filth and disease in the suburbs of some large town, and become additional competitors for the mouldy crust or half-gnaw'd bone.

And is there no remedy for a system that inevitably leads to vice and wretchedness ? This is not the place for an answer to this important question ; but we hope that a satisfactory one will be found in the sequel. After the above account, it would be almost superfluous to descant on the very great diminution of timber, even within the last sixty years ; whole counties, containing scarce any plantations, where formerly extensive forests covered the land. It has more than once been our lot to notice, that where commerce and manufactures sweep away forest trees, a fresh supply necessarily succeeds in the plantations that rise on all sides to satisfy the demand ; but where want and negligence create devastation, no renovating care retrieves the desert prospect.

Before we leave this subject, it will be proper to observe, that commerce and other causes have, in various parts, modified the condition and appearance. It is, indeed, generally supposed, that the north of Ireland is totally unlike the south ; that the Protestant counties of Ulster are as flourishing as the south of Scotland. If this can be said of any place, it is of the yeomanry of Fermanagh ; but when we consider that the 5000 freeholders of that county are all Protestants, none of the Catholic inhabitants holding property, we perceive at once that the account is so fallacious, and the appearance of wretched cabins confirms our suspicion. Of Londonderry, Donegal, Tyrone, and part of Antrim, we have already stated that they are amongst the worst cultivated of all the counties. We will illustrate our assertion by the following extracts from the report of the deputation appointed to inspect the condition of the estate of Moneymore in Derry, at a time when (in 1818) it contained 1791 families, in the following proportions :—

Church of England	334
Presbyterian	4347
Catholic	6850
Total	10,740 Individuals.

“ Of that number, 5523 are reputed not to be in a condition to pay for medical or surgical aid if they should need it ; and it is estimated that there are 2419 children under about twelve years of age, whose parents are not in circumstances to enable them to pay for any instruction for them.” They also inform us that, “The three divisions of the property are inhabited by persons of three different descriptions (Scotch settlers anterior to the Reformation, original Irish, and Scotch settlers since the Reformation) : nevertheless, the general habits of life, and mode of cultivation, are much alike in all of them. There is a cabin, and sometimes two, upon each holding and subdivision of holding. These cabins are mere mud-huts, covered sometimes with straw, at other times with reeds or swards, and are rarely water-tight : the natural soil is the floor. Sometimes there is a hole in the roof to serve for a chimney ; at other times the door serves as the channel for the exit of the smoke, and generally, but not universally, there is a partition between that part of the cabin which is devoted to the use of the family, and that part which is applied to the use of the horse, the cow, or the goat, and the pigs. Their furniture and clothing are bad : upon the second division they appear miserable in the extreme. None of the clothing appears to have been originally made of coarse materials adapted to the use of peasants, as in England, but to be patched cast-off clothes, for which object a considerable trade is carried on between Scotland and Ireland.”

“ The families thus housed and clothed, with a horse, if they are able to keep one, severally do the whole work of a farm. They grow nothing but oats, potatoes, and flax. The course in which they follow each other seems rather to be accidental than regular.”

Omitting exceptions for the present, the above is a fair description of the vaunted estates in Derry, possessed on the grant of James I. by the twelve great corporations of the city of London : nay, more, it is the property of the most liberal of those corporations, the Draper’s Company, who instituted the inquiry for the purpose of doing good, and who have since set an example by really doing good. We shall by and bye explain why, amidst so much poverty, the Catholics are even worse off than the Protestants.

It may thus be perceived, that although much mischief is no doubt derived from contending opinions among men of different origins, persuasions, and prejudices, the great contrast is between the more liberal principles and tendencies of commerce, and the sordid or ill-judged proceedings of the agricultural proprietors. Whilst the spirit of commerce tries to extend capital, and sustain itself by the proceeds thereof, the clumsy regulations of the landlords and their dependants, annihilate its effects, and convert capital into unproductive revenue. Every shilling that is embarked in trade is supposed to repay interest, and thereby to increase the means of further outlay and improvement : but Irish landlords and Irish cultivators carry off the very fund of nature’s fertility, and restore neither interest nor capital

In the tables of imports and exports at the end of this essay, items will be found that tend to prove that Ireland is really progressing, notwithstanding the above gloomy picture ; and although this outline is a true portrait of the general character of Irish letting and sub-letting, and of the improvidence that ensues, we trust that the effects of British enterprise and Britain’s example, with the attempts in progress to establish a better plan, and to create confidence and care, in Ireland itself, will soon efface the likeness, and paint a smile where the scowl of despair is now delineated. Till lately, the increase of exports and imports was nearly balanced by a fearful increase of unprovided inhabitants ; poor lands are annually taken up and abandoned; and in many places, manufactures that for a time appeared to flourish, find it impossible to compete with their rivals in Scotland and in England.

Before we mention the various proposed improvements for Ireland, let us enjoy the contemplation of prosperous realities, of successful attempts to plant civilisation and comfort even amidst lawless misery.

We have already noticed the estate of Moneymore, in Londonderry. In consequence of the report on its misery, and the recommendation of the deputation, the Draper’s Company gave heed to the suggestion of laying out a large portion of its rent on real improvement, as it had been found that there was so great a deficiency of capital, that the houses of sixty-four persons were in an actually dangerous state, without any hope of remedy.

A few years after, in the report of 1832, we find that “ the deputation were highly pleased with the state and general appearance of the town of Moneymore. Comparing it with other towns through which they passed on their way from Dublin, and with those which they subsequently visited on their return by way of Belfast, they cannot but congratulate the Court on the complete and entire success which has attended their plans adopted by the Company. It is difficult by any language” (say they) “ to draw a picture which shall adequately convey to the mind a representation of the contrast between Moneymore, as it was less than fifteen years ago, and Moneymore as it now is : the few remains of wretched huts and cabins of the old town serving to render the contrast more striking, while they cannot fail to induce an anxiety, that the same liberal spirit of improvement which has done go much, may be long continued with equal success.”

“ The deputation visited all the schools under the patronage of the Company. They were much gratified by the appearance and conduct of all of them (the children).”

“ The deputation, while at Draper’s Town, witnessed the esteem, and even affection, with which all the neighbouring tenantry regard Mr. Savage, the surgeon of the dispensary there ; as an instance of which, the labouring people in his neighbourhood had, of their own accord, and without his knowledge, shortly before the arrival of the deputation, gratuitously cut and housed the whole of his harvest.” We need only to add, as a proof of the good feeling of all concerned, that the Company paid proper attention to the former reports, by erecting a church, and in repairing Catholic and Presbyterian chapels, and even by allowing stipends to the ministers thereof when they required it.

If not the most instructive, probably the most interesting evidence relative to a particular improvement, is contained in the answers of Mr. John Wiggins to the commissioners appointed to examine the state of the poor in Ireland. Mr. Wiggins, who gave his evidence in May 1830, had, for twenty-two years, managed the estate of Lord Headley, at Iveragh, in Kerry. His account of it is as follows :—

“ It is in a very mountainous district by the sea-side, on the banks of the bay of Castle-main. There are about 15,000 acres, English. In 1808, the population was an extremely savage one. It was an asylum for all the offenders, robbers, and murderers, in that part, and of the whole county ; it used to be the boast of the people, that no criminal was ever punished from it. The first time I visited the place, a major of the army waited upon me to say he was deputed as escort to collect some taxes, the hearth-money, I believe. He requested my influence, as the appointed agent, to dispose those people to pay ; for he said they had met him upon the bridge, or a small pass between the mountains, and they told him they would sacrifice him and his party of soldiers if he stirred another foot into that place, and he made a retreat, and called upon me to assist, which of course I declined ; and I believe they never paid any thing, whilst the rest of the country did pay. Shipwrecks called out a great many of their qualities of enterprise : they used to build their cabins upon the cliff, in order to have a good look out for the wrecks ; they considered them as part of their means of subsistence. Their habitations were very miserable, the very lowest kind of huts that are found in Ireland, without windows or chimneys. I recollect at that time there were about 1200 cows upon those 15,000 acres, and the place was considerably overstocked, which is a very common fault of the cottier tenants of Ireland. The cattle were called lifters when they were so starved that they could not get up without lifting. They were constantly quarrelling ; it was a kind of sessions that one held in going there : they were coming to complain of each other, and constant assaults and fightings were taking place amongst them ; that a good deal arose from the partnership tenancy ; there were fourteen or fifteen people associated in one lease, and those people were constantly squabbling about the division of their little meadows, or the stocking of (the stock on) their little holdings. Very few wore shoes and stockings ; they were extremely ill clothed at the time.

“ There was one mountain road which passed at the side of a very extraordinary cliff, like Penmanmaur, in Wales, and extremely rugged and rough ; it was the only road in the district. There was not a single cart at that time in the whole district : they had sticks placed with crowbars, and drawn upon the ends, but very seldom even that, for back-load horses with baskets were then used.

“ At the present moment it exhibits a very extraordinary contrast to the condition I have described : the people are now well clothed, they are extremely industrious and orderly, and I have seen them attending the chapel twice a-day, as well clothed, and as neat and orderly, and

as well conducted, as you see in a country village in England. The houses are very considerably changed ; there are about 150 new houses built upon the place, and they are as neat houses as you will see almost in England—some of them are sixty feet in front, and the old cabins are converted into cow-houses and places for cattle. The agriculture has considerably improved ; they have got into the habit of using sea-sand. I gave them a small allowance for the use of it at first, but I gradually reduced that ; and they now use an immense quantity without any allowance. We have had about 2000 acres of bog reclaimed since the year 1808, and considerably improved. The original road has been converted, by a new line, into a fine mail-coach road ; but Lord Headley has made, at his own expense, about twelve miles of the other road fit for the purposes of the people. Almost every one of the principal farmers has now a car. I conceive the state of Glenbegh to be now greatly superior to the neighbouring districts, and really, to a stranger, affording a great contrast. There was a great pressure upon parts of Kerry in 1821 ; out of a population 230,000, 170,000 were reported to have been destitute of the means of subsistence for the moment. Instead of suffering from want of food, the people of Glenbegh were enabled to sell food to the rest of the country : of potatoes they sold a very considerable quantity.

“ The means adopted for the improvement of Glenbegh were, generally, an attention to the character of the people, and a constant desire on the part of the managers of the estate, to avail themselves of the disposition of the people to the improvement of the lands, and to the improvement of their habits and character generally. It was done with very little sacrifice of rent or of money, but a constant and earnest attention to the object of improving the estate by the industry of the people ; and whenever any particular instance of good management or industry, or of care to collect sand or sea-weed, or to reclaim or cultivate land, or to build a decent house, was evinced by any of the people, they were encouraged by some little emolument or attention. I think the first system was, to allow the people half the value of the improvements made out of their rents ; but as those rents were very considerably higher than could have been paid, we conceived that the allowance was rather nominal than real, though it had the real effect of improving the estate. If the estate were to be sold now, I should say it would sell for many thousands of pounds more than it would have done before ; even allowing for what would have been the natural progress of the estate without those attentions and urging. In fact, seeing the necessity of either abandoning the estate to waste, or of doing something in the way of improvement, Lord Headley wished its improvement to be urged, and it was urged ; and his own personal attention had a great deal to do with it,

“ Every kind of legal process is now carried on there, I think, more easily than in any other part of the county. During the disturbances that occurred in its neighbourhood, the inhabitants had a meeting, and passed resolutions in a style rather of superiority, disavowing any participation in those feelings, and stating that the reason they did not, was the attention that had been paid to them, and to their improvement, for so many years.”

The following evidence relates to a large extent of coast round the south of Ireland, from the Shannon westward, even to the Suir, to the south-east. It is taken from the answers of Mr. Barry, inspector-general of the fisheries for the south of Ireland, May 1830. That gentleman had then held the above office nearly eleven years.

“ A great many of the peasantry are employed in the fisheries ; principally in and adjacent to the best harbours, Dungarvan, Kinsale, Youghal, Courtmashery, Glandore, Baltimore, Bantry, and Dingle.

“ The number of fishermen in the district was, by the last returns, about 25,000 persons. That number has been considerably augmented. Fisheries are at best but a precarious mode of subsistence ; however, they have given profitable occupation to a very large number, and

have diffused a great deal of wealth among other classes, who derive the benefit of the industry of those people ; that fact may be particularly illustrated by reference to the town of Dungarvan, which, from a miserable wretched village, is grown into a place of very considerable importance, chiefly from the fisheries. Every thing that the most beneficent individual could do to promote industry and improvement, has indeed been done by the noble proprietor (the Duke of Devonshire), and still more particularly by his invaluable representative, Colonel Currie ; but their efforts have been very much aided by the fisheries. The general average of the wages of labour in the country is from 8*d.* to 10*d.* a day in that quarter ; I should think that any industrious fisherman can, on an average, earn much more. I think the condition of the fishermen of Dungarvan is perhaps rather worse than that of ether fishermen, owing to the circumstance of their being exclusively dependent upon the one source of employment, and having generally no small spots of land upon which their families may raise potatoes. The clothing, and the furniture, and the comforts of the houses of the fishermen generally, have decidedly improved. I think the progress of improvement in Ireland, both moral and practical, for the last ten years, has been exceedingly rapid ; I think there is a considerable diminution of crime, and a very gratifying submission to the laws; and there is, generally speaking, the highest gratification experienced by the peasantry, at the amazing alteration that has taken place in the administration of justice. I regret to say there is a great general want of employment, there being a considerable supply of labour over the demand. In those parts of the country with which I am best acquainted, means of employing that labour profitably, so as to yield an adequate return for the capital that may be engaged in the operation,, are afforded to an indefinite degree by the contiguity of the sea. The Board under which I have acted, within a few years, adopted the plan of small loans, to enable the peasantry upon the coast to avail themselves of the advantage of their contiguity to the fisheries, that has worked admirably well ; many persons who were an incumbrance and burthen to society, no better than paupers, have become productive, useful, and industrious, and have repaid, with extraordinary punctuality, those small loans [4]. The idea of those loans owes its origin to the judicious suggestions of the London committee. It has been in operation since 1823, but not judiciously or efficiently worked longer than about three or four years. The Fishery Board has also built small piers on different parts of the coast, principally for the fisheries, but also for landing sea manure, and for the general purposes of trade. In all places where such works have been erected, in consequence of applications from individuals who have contributed, they have been well executed, and are extremely useful. Some works were erected in the early part of the Board's operations, when the selection of sites was not judicious : they have been of little service. The condition that requires the pecuniary contributions of the party applying, has had a tendency to secure the proper selection of works, and a fair return upon capital invested. It is a principle I should be glad to see extended to almost all the public works of Ireland. I scarcely know any place in Ireland where the investment of capital, judiciously laid out, would not produce a profit far beyond the interest of the money expended. I should not conceive it advantageous to lay out money, either raised locally or from general taxation, that did not yield a profitable return. The difficulty that at present exists in preventing such employment, is the want of capital, perhaps in the quarter where it could be most judiciously expended. Public works, if undertaken upon the aforesaid principles, entirely limited to works yielding a return, would afford the best, and, in my mind, the only effectual remedy for the disproportion that exists between the supply and the demand for labourers.

“ Agriculture has also been improved to a most astonishing degree, upon the opening of roads. All along those roads that have been lately laid down and executed, through remote and wild districts, there is an appearance of increasing civilization and improvement that is quite amazing, considering the very short time they have been executed. I think it is the first step towards inducing a better arrangement of the population, that every thing will follow as soon as those remote districts are rendered accessible by proper communication. Among the

causes that prevent improvement are, very general distress among the owners and proprietors of land ; in some cases family entails, which prevent leases to enterprising persons with means.

“ Distress chiefly prevails in the manufacturing parts of the county of Cork; where there was greatest prosperity a few years ago, when our local manufactures flourished, there is now most distress. The towns of Bandon and Clonakilty are in a most miserable state of distress. I never saw things so heart-rending as one may witness there. That source of encouragement which I think has been the most effectual in improving the fisheries, was the system of making loans for the purpose of enabling poor destitute persons on the sea-coast to avail themselves of the advantages of their contiguity to the sea. It has worked admirably well, and the repayment of the small loans has been uncommonly regular, considering the miserable state of destitution in which the persons were. The loans have been much more punctually repaid in the southern and the western districts than in the northern or the eastern. An interest of five per cent, is invariably charged and paid The Fishery Loan Fund has been arranged under a strict system of rigid superintendence, I consider that where ever the fishermen have had small gardens, or parcels of land, there has been generally least liability to sudden distress. The possession of potatoe grounds, if carried too far, induces them to neglect their fishing ; but I do not think the cultivation of an acre would be considered farming ; and of course there will be parts of the family not occupied in fishing, who could produce, through their own labour, a sufficiency of potatoes. The system of clearing estates is generally conducted in a manner very inconsistent with the principles of humanity. The lease of a property expiring, the landlord has found it to be his interest to remove what he considered the surplus population upon it, and to divide the land into a smaller number of large farms ; that system, accompanied by restriction upon the takers of those farms, on the subdividing or the giving any portion of them to the small tenantry, has obliged those persons to abandon the country, and flock into the towns.

“ There is a very considerable emigration to England at certain seasons of the year. Those who emigrate are generally our best labourers. I attribute to the system of interchange between the two countries, and the habits of industry our labourers acquire in their occasional migrations to England, some of our greatest improvements [5]. They generally bring back money, and are certainly better disposed to take care of it, after having been in England than before. The late facilities given by steam navigation to the intercourse between the two countries, have produced very considerable improvements in the habits of the Irish peasantry. I have also had an opportunity of witnessing the beneficial consequences resulting from the establishment of a department almost exclusively English, or Welsh ; I mean the Coast-guard. Wherever they have been stationed, the most obvious improvement has taken place in the neighbourhood. They are an extremely well regulated, well-conducted class of persons ; and the example they have shown has been productive of the most beneficial consequences. Not the slightest jealousy was ever manifested on the part of the people towards those strangers.”

The settlements of Iskerbane and Castle Sampson, on the estate of Lord Clonbrock, in Roscommon, are also very interesting. By an expenditure estimated at 1200*l.*, sixty families have been settled in comfort, and a turbulent district rendered peaceable, whilst the return of six per cent, on the outlay proves it to be a wholesome speculation.

A main feature in the plan was to assist drainage and irrigation, by completing the leading drain, leaving it to the settlers to make the small drains as they require them. Mr. Blacker's arrangements on Lord Gosford's estate have also been very successful.

To the above evidence relative to improvement in the means of subsistence, and other opportunities of improvement among the peasantry of Ireland, we must add the case of the

Barony of Forth, in Wexford, and Shanagolden, in Limerick, as well as Lismore, Besborough, Ballasedere, and the estates of Lord Palmerston, near Sligo, and those of Lord Duncannon and Mr. Tighe, near Waterford.

The Baronies of Forth and Bargie were originally a colony from Wales [6], and are particularly remarkable for the good cultivation and neatness of their fields, and the steady propriety, and apparent comfort of the inhabitants, who have in the south of Ireland become proverbial for every thing commendable; living abstemiously, in order to provide against probable difficulties, and exerting their utmost care and industry to render their homes worthy the good name of their society, and a valuable example to all around. If the influence of that example had extended over the whole island, there would be no complaint of misery in Ireland: but the effect has been but local, although all around them, the virtue of *providence* is more remarkable than in any other agricultural district in Ireland [6]. A superficial writer, who has monopolised too much of public attention, reproaches the “farmers of Wexford with living penuriously,” in order to fortuneing their daughters, as none will marry them without, it being usual to match acre for acre, or pound for pound.

If this custom were a little more general, comfort and intelligence, sobriety and education, would also be more general, and that reckless improvidence which has ever been the unconquerable impediment to honourable civilization, would have been overcome. Neither the warmth of manner, the amusing incongruity of the Irish, nor their desperate misery, would indeed add zest and poignancy to our romances, but the work of legislation would be accomplished.

Shanagolden was an instance of the same kind. A colony of Protestants from Germany having been settled there by Lord Southwell, at the beginning of the last century, the village and its neighbourhood improved to such a degree as to form a most cheerful contrast to other spots. It is situated a little to the south of the Shannon, half-way between the town of Limerick and the sea. It obtained the admiration of Arthur Young, in 1768; but we lament that its superiority is no longer conspicuous.

The estates of the Duke of Devonshire and the Earl of Fitzwilliam, are too well known to be amongst the best managed in Ireland to need a long comment. That of Lord Palmerston, near Sligo, is also remarkable for the liberality of its owner. Lord P. is said to spend the whole of its revenue on its improvement. Ballasadere, the seat of Sir Robert Gore Booth, in the same neighbourhood, or rather, we may say, between the Bay of Donegal and that of Sligo, on the shores of the Atlantic, is also a rather extraordinary instance of sudden improvement. The above-mentioned domains belong to generous, liberal-minded absentees: Sir Robert is no longer so: having improved his taste by travel, he has returned home, in order to sweep away the unsightly hovel and slovenly cabin. The building of his new splendid mansion has given a stimulus to industry, and the neat cottages with which he is surrounding it, will probably create a taste for comfort, and a demand for further improvement. Lord Besborough is renowned for having set a similar example at his fine estate at Carrick-on-Suir. There are other instances of noble attempts at improvement; and although some of the nobility and gentry have been hastily blamed for attempting to improve their property by refusing small plots of ground to poor tenants, we feel assured that the contrary system is at least as injurious. Ireland does not want more tenants, but more capital; not a greater number of wretched cabins, but an increase of comfort; and before we have done, we hope to convince the candid and the intelligent, that excessive indulgence is as injurious, because more insidious, than open severity, and that nothing but an increase of liberality and security, which depend entirely on an equality of taxation, and not on bounties—on strict justice, not on favour—on the judicious employment of a reproducing capital, and not on the thoughtless application of revenue (which, however great, must always be exhaustible)—can raise Ireland to an equal

participation of prosperity with England. Enough is, indeed, already evident, to prove the correctness of this opinion. To build a palace may call forth industry, but it does not replace the amount lavished thereon ; when other works succeed so as to employ the increased skill and industry, it may be called useful, otherwise it increases the supply beyond the demand ; but the erection of piers and construction of ports, the formation of roads and canals, the increase of fertility to the soil, repay the disbursement with interest, and is again, with increased means, employed in further and progressive improvement.

[1] The general character might be worked upon by means of the exceptions, and it is quite clear that some of the Irish are capable of saving, and of fore-sight. The following instances may suffice.

1. Some years back, a poor wretch who had crossed the Channel in quest of the means of paying his rent, was returning on board a steamer from Bristol, in so miserable a plight, that the gentlemen on board thought proper to purchase a pair of trousers for him of one of the sailors, and while he was putting them on, the captain kicked his rags overboard, to his utter dismay, for, if his shrieks, and his tears,—his groans, and assertions, could be believed, no less than nineteen pound were concealed in the tattered linings.

2. Three young women, cousins, arrived in London from Ireland, in hopes of procuring service : two of them soon secured situations, and they assisted the other until she also obtained one. At the end of three or four years, two of them discovered that, at the instigation of an English lady, the other had placed the principal part of her wages in the savings-bank, and that it amounted to fifteen pounds. They endeavoured to persuade her to draw the amount, and spend it in jewellery ; but confident in the advice she had followed, she endured with many a tear the utmost of their sneers and jokes. Not long after, all three were deprived of their places, and then the providence of the one saved them all from ruin.

[2] Besides confiscations, the Irish or Breton laws were a great cause of insecurity : under them, murder was not punished with death, and succession to property was in some measure elective : they remained in force, without the English pale, so late as the middle of the sixteenth century

[3] Effects of this description, no doubt, led to the system, on entailed estates, of not granting leases. One extreme keeps another in countenance.

[4] Such an arrangement, if between individual, might be called a natural combination of capital and industry.

[5] It is very surprising that this colony should, from the time of Henry II. have remained distinct and peculiar : that it should have retained its original language and manners to the present time. What a subject for investigation !— See Mrs. S. C. Hall's " Characteristics."

[6] Might they not be located on portions of large estates, as examples and instructors to others ?

Leighs New Pocket Road-book of Ireland: Containing an Account of All the ... (1835)

Author : Samuel Leigh

Publisher : Printed for Leigh

Year : 1835

Language : English

Digitizing sponsor : Google

Book from the collections of : Harvard University

Collection : americana

Notes : Reproduction of original from Goldsmiths' Library, University of London.

Source : Internet Archive

<http://www.archive.org/details/leighsnewpocket01leiggoog>

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

June 13 2011