

building. Having done that, they fought their way back into their stronghold. When I had thought over all these I began to realize how it was that O'Connell loved his people with such passionate attachment. Their generosity, self-forgetfulness, courage, humanity, their love of poetry, of song; the dark shadow thrown across their history, the beauty of their fatherland, brought to my mind the words of the poet:

"What flood reflects a shore so sweet  
As Shannon great or pastoral Ban?  
Or who a friend or foe could meet  
So generous as an Irishman?"

Now, surely, it is but natural to feel very keenly when such a race as this is suffering acutely for no fault of their own. One's very love and admiration makes one feel all the more vehemently for them. I will not weary or sadden you, ladies and gentlemen, by a long account of the sorrows of the Irish people, but the effect would not be complete if I did not ask you to bear with me whilst I tell you some other thoughts that passed through my mind. I will select three of them. I remembered then, in studying the poet Spencer one passage in his prose works which I have never forgotten. He had been presented with 3000 acres of land, part of the Desmond property, which had been confiscated. This was in the sixteenth century. Spencer, who himself, if we may believe Ben Jonson, died from lack of bread, visited his estate, and describes the peasants thus: "Out of every corner of the woods and glynns they came creeping forth upon their hands, for their legs could not bear them. They looked like anatomies of death—they spake like ghosts crying out of their graves—they ate the dead carrion; happy when they could find them; yea, and one another soon after; insomuch the very carcasses they spared not to scrape out of their graves." What could possibly be more frightful than that picture? I turned from it. I remembered the famine of 1739, 1741 and 1742, of which history says little. In 1744, 400,000 Irishmen are said to have perished from want. One small village buried 500. For a time they subsisted on grass, docks and nettles. "I have seen," says an eyewitness, "the laborer endeavoring to work at his spade, but fainting for want

of food, and forced to quit it. I have seen the aged father eating grass like a beast, and in the anguish of his soul wishing for his dissolution. I have seen the helpless orphan exposed on the dunghill, and none to take him in for fear of infection; and I have seen the hungry infant sucking at the breast of the already expired parent. The famine of 1847 afforded me similar pictures of heart-rending distress. I recalled the efforts of the people in 1846 to make good the losses of the previous year. I remembered the fierce energy with which they worked. I recollect the blasting of their hopes, when in one single night the green crop over hill and in the fertile valley was shrivelled and blackened by the universal blight. The population were literally driven into their graves. Their former energy had turned to a stolid, silent despair. It was a common sight to see the cottier and his family sitting on the fence of their little holding, looking silently and with a vacant stare upon the black crop of blighted promise, which they had worked hard to plant, but which was rotten in the earth. You might address them, and they would not speak to you. You might try to cheer them, but it was too late. They felt their hour had come, and that they had to follow others to the grave. One might crawl away at night, and rest in some doorway out of the moonlight; on opening the door in the morning the servant, or master of the house, found a corpse. The spirit had departed to its everlasting rest. Others would lie down to a dream of feasting and fulness, and wake up to starve and to die. It seemed as if the peasant world of Ireland, that noble race was absolutely coming to an end." These were some of the thoughts which passed through my mind, some of the pictures which presented themselves. But what have they to do with the present distress? I found they had much to do with it. For I remembered, first, that all famines are much the same in their aspects of distress, and that, when I thought how much the Irish people had suffered in the past, I feel all the more moved to assist them in their present necessity. Secondly I could in some way measure the present exigency by the exigencies of former times;