

or near it. The causes even of the present destitution are not all immediate; they are not all in the failure of the potato crop, not all in the character of those who plant the potato and live on it. The potato, it is true, is a precarious vegetable, and the people of Ireland, who have fed upon it for generations, are not in all things the wisest and most provident of nations; but in any sound state of things, it would not, surely, be within the limits of any contingency, that millions should wither into the dust, which had failed to afford nourishment to a fragile root. Such afflictions as Ireland is now enduring, terrible as they are, are not singular in her experience. They have been but too often her misfortune; and though, to our view, they are strange, they are, in her story, sufficiently familiar. But these afflictions come not from the skies above or the earth beneath; and, therefore, we shall not ascend to the heavens, nor go down to the deep, to seek their causes. Most of them are within the range of very ordinary inquiry, and they are both intelligible and explainable. I shall speak on causes of two kinds; one historical, and one social.

And, first, of the historical. Ireland has long been a country of agitation. The elements of discord were sown early in her history; and throughout her course, they have been nourished, and not eradicated. At first, divided into small principalities, like all countries so circumstanced, strife was constantly taking place among them, either for dominion or defence. It did not happen to Ireland as to England, that these separate states had been subdued into unity by a native prince, before the intrusion of a foreign ruler. It did not happen to Ireland as to England, that the foreign ruler took up his residence in it, identified his dignity with it, and that his children became natives of the soil. England, previous to the invasion of William the Conqueror, was a united empire, and therefore, though at the battle of Hastings, the