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HOME RULE DEBATE.

AN INTERESTING AND ABLE ADDRESS

The power of life and liberty was in their hands. Whenever they were in want of anything they swept down upon the fields of the Irish and seized upon the stores they had accumulated. The killing of an Irishman or the violation of an Irishwoman by an English colonist was no crime in those rude days. Under Queen Elizabeth, Ireland was invaded by an army who were little more than plunderers. The province of Munster was so rigorously laid waste that Mr. Froude declares that "the lowing of a cow or the sound of a cow-boy's whistle was not to be heard from Valentia to the Rock of Cashel."

Munster was divided into seignories of from 4,000 to 12,000 acres and donated to English adventurers.

In the other parts of Ireland the estates of the Irish chiefs and their followers were similarly confiscated and divided. In this policy there is one fatal mistake. In taking the land of the people they should also have completely destroyed the people; for a nation of tenants outside of slavery is impossible. Under James I., to the policy of plunder was added the policy of religious persecution, which was to last for many years. James was an intolerant Protestant, and the Irish were all the more devoted to Roman Catholicism, because their oppressors were Protestant. It was in the reign of James that the Scotch first obtained a share of the confiscated lands and the Protestant settlement of Ulster began. In this reign, too, vast tracts of lands were granted to great London Companies—some of which—the mercers, salters, skinners, ironmongers and drapers—still hold the land.

AFTER THE REVOLUTION IN ENGLAND,

under Cromwell, was completed, he had to turn his attention to Ireland and there he did his work thoroughly. He captured Drogheda and put all its people to the sword; he conquered Wexford and slaughtered pitilessly its inhabitants, and soon the whole island was at his feet. Thus came, as usual, the partition of Irish lands. All lands outside of Connaught, belonging to the Irish, were confiscated and divided among the disbanded soldiers of the commonwealth and political adventurers. To get rid of the Irish, word was sent through Europe that nations friendly to England would not beat their drums in vain in the Irish market places, and thus 44,000 Irishmen enlisted under foreign banners to fight the battles of strangers. Women and girls were transported by thousands to a shameful slavery in the West Indies and to the plantations of Virginia. The remaining Irish were cooped up in Connaught and were forbidden under pain of death to appear within two miles of the river or four miles of the sea. It is curious to reflect that all these precautions were not able to secure the Cromwellian settlers from the dreaded Irish influence, and that 40 years later many of the children of Cromwell's troopers could not speak a word of English. Many of the Irish, however, refusing to go into exile or into Connaught, took to the woods and mountains, the clefts of the rocks and the caves of the earth and lived a life of wild brigandage. They levied a tariff upon all travellers who were not sufficiently protected, (I do not mean a protective tariff), and from the native Irish word they used in demanding money were called Tories. I apologize to my Conservative friends for mentioning this interesting fact and beg to assure them that I honestly believe that the methods of the party have been somewhat improved and refined since those old days.

IN THE REIGN OF CHARLES II

a new form of Irish persecution began. The importation of Irish cattle to England was prohibited as a nuisance, owing to the fear by English Squires of lower prices. As cattle were one of the main products of the Island, and they had little else that they could give in exchange for English goods, this was a terrible blow to Ireland's commerce. This jealousy of the English agriculturist has had a noted effect in the electoral discussion of Irish matters in England ever since. Later on it extended to the English laborer, with whom the hordes of Irish who crossed the channel to work in harvesting came into competition, and it is only lately that this feeling has

in any way been alleviated. The embargo on the cattle trade was placed in the reign of Charles II. Afterwards similar treatment was meted out to the Irish linen and woolen industry and Irish ships were not allowed to trade with America or the west Indies. It seemed as if Ireland was not to be allowed any means of becoming prosperous. The great Wm. Pitt, who, in 1800, was the cause of depriving Ireland of her independent parliament, which in 18 short years had caused every industry to prosper, said in 1785:—"The uniform policy of England has been to deprive Ireland of the use of her own resources and make her subservient to the interest and opulence of the English people." The great writer, Junius, wrote about the same time: "Ireland has been uniformly plundered and oppressed." One of the most contemptible characters in all history is James II., of England. He was a coward, a liar, a bigot, a poltroon, devoid of honor or manly virtue. It was one of the accidents of history that the Irish, in their struggle against English oppression, should accept his leadership in their endeavor to get back their own. The ideas of leader and people were entirely different. James was an intense Roman Catholic bigot, who ardently desired the supremacy of the Roman Church in all things, even to the power of persecuting Non-conformists. His next object was to recover the throne of England. The Irish, on the other hand, solely wished for the recovery of their land and the liberty of their country. They were actuated by an undying hatred of the English, and who can blame them? What good had they ever received from England? Robbery, death and oppression had been

THEIR CONSTANT EXPERIENCE.

I say that James II. was a leader unworthy the Irish, and I thank God that the brave Prentice Boys of Derry closed their gates on his French allies and nobly held the town against all assaults. I thank God that victory perched upon the banners of William at the Boyne, and that England, and Ireland, too, were forever rid of the stupid Stuart line. But I cannot praise the English for their subsequent conduct in Ireland. When brave Sarsfield surrendered Limerick to William's general, it was after a treaty concluded to the effect that the Roman Catholics should have freedom to worship God after their manner, and that the followers of King James should be allowed to retain their land. This solemn treaty was broken. The estates of the rebels were confiscated and divided by the English. At William's death the Irish were owners of less than one-seventh of Ireland. The English parliament determined to make Ireland Protestant by penal laws. Under these laws Catholics, and by this word were meant the Irish, could not sit in the Irish parliament or vote members to it. They were excluded from the army, the navy, the city or town corporations, the magistracy, the Bench, the Bar, the grand juries and the vestries.

They could not be sheriffs or soldiers, gamekeepers or constables. They were forbidden to own any arms, and any two justices or sheriffs might at any time issue a search warrant for arms. The discovery of any kind of weapon rendered its Catholic owner liable to fine, imprisonment, whipping, or the pillory. They could not own a horse worth more than five pounds, and any Protestant tendering that sum could compel his Catholic neighbor to sell his steed.

No education whatever was allowed to Catholics. A Catholic could not go to the University; he might not be the guardian of a child; he might not keep a school, or send his children to be educated abroad, or teach himself. No Catholic might buy land or inherit or receive it as a gift from Protestants, or hold life annuities or leases for more than thirty-one years, or any leases on such terms that the profits of the land exceeded one-third the value of the land. If a Catholic purchased an estate, the first Protestant who informed against him became its proprietor.

The eldest son of a Catholic on becoming Protestant, became heir-at-law to the whole estate of his father, and reduced his father to the position of a mere life tenant. A wife who became a Protestant was immediately freed from her husband's control, and assigned a certain portion of her husband's property. Any child, however young, who professed to be a Protestant, was at once taken from his father's care and a certain portion of his father's property

assigned to him. In fact, the Catholic Irish were excluded in their own country from every profession, from every government office, from the highest to the lowest, and from almost every duty or privilege of a citizen. It was laid down from the Bench by Lord Chancellor Bowes and Chief Justice Robinson that "the law does not suppose any such person to exist as an Irish Roman Catholic."

Such were in brief

THE FAMOUS PENAL LAWS.

These laws are enough to make every Protestant blush that such laws could be passed in the name and interest of his religion. Although most of these laws have been repealed, many of them in the memory of men now living, the evil effects of them are almost ineffaceable. Irish self-esteem can only be placated by a measure of Legislative independence. Peace and amity between the two countries would be cheaply bought by the re-establishment in Dublin of an Irish parliament with powers akin to those of the Quebec Legislature. The people of Ireland will be only too happy to forget the bitter past and re-establish friendly relations with her sister nation. Mark the progress that has been made in the friendly relations between Ireland and England by the adoption of Home Rule by the Liberal Party into their party platform. All the currents of the political atmosphere between the two islands have been cleansed and sweetened; for Ireland now knows what she never knew before, that a deep rift of division runs all through the English nation in her favor; that a vast majority in Scotland and in Wales favor her pretensions; that there is not throughout the land a district, a parish or a village, where there are not hearts beating in unison with her heart, and minds earnestly bent on the acknowledgement and permanent establishment of her claims to national existence. Remember, too, that though there are only 5,000,000 Irish in Ireland there are more than 15,000,000 of the race scattered through the world, and the interest of these is powerful, especially in the United States. In any international complication it would be unfortunate to have this influence against the Empire. Why has the settlement of this question been so long delayed? Surely national animosity does not govern the mind of England in this latter end of the nineteenth century? It is true that this race bitterness has largely disappeared. Fear of the persecution of the Protestant minority is only a pretence, for their interests were secured by innumerable guards in Mr. Gladstone's Bill. No. Under

THE HOME RULE QUESTION

there lie material interests that may be affected by it. Home Rule once granted, the first step towards the settling of the economic problems of Ireland will have been taken. What are these economic problems and what are their relations to England? They proceed from the repeated wholesale confiscations of land into the hands of a few. The Irish are a singular example of a nation without land. They exist not by the grace of God but by the grace of landlords, many of whom never set foot in Ireland. Under such a system the people are little better than slaves. They must do what their landlords tell them. They must pay rack-rent no matter how unreasonably high it may be. For if they refuse, eviction lies before them and death by the wayside for their wives and babes. I denounce this condition of affairs as morally iniquitous and contrary to the law of nature.

Let me illustrate. Has the Irish child born to-day a right to live—to grow upon the land, to stand upon the land and breathe the air of Heaven? You answer certainly. He cannot be murdered, so that it must be God's will that he live upon the land of the country in which he is born. Then I tell you that 5,000,000 of human beings live upon the surface of Ireland and breathe the vital air not by the will of God, but by the grace of thousands of rent exacting land-owners, whose title to the soil is based on no divine right but on the historic plunderings I have recalled to your memory. Here is the great wrong that must be remedied. I want to tell you the horrible fact that during the so-called famines in Ireland food was being exported from Ireland to England, and that no famine prices prevailed. The famine proceeded simply from this, that the peasants could not touch the products of the soil, the products of their

own labor, and their own small potato crops failing they had

NOTHING TO DO BUT STARVE.

Do you expect the Irish peasant, dying of starvation in his hut, to turn his eyes to Heaven and thank God that he had at least the privilege of dying under the most glorious constitution in the world? Can you sanction a system, which in a few years drove 3,000,000 Irishmen from their native land, and which produces a steady stream of emigration thence to freer lands and freer skies. Wide estates have ruined Italy, bewailed the Roman historian, and the same cursed blight has fallen upon British Isles. For it must be remembered that Scotland and England have suffered, though not to the same extent, from the curse of too extensive landlordism, based on the same title of historic wrong or fraud. In 1847, John Bright said:—"I am thoroughly convinced that everything the government or parliament can do for Ireland will be unavailing unless the foundation of the work be laid deep and well, by clearing away the fetters under which land is now held, so that it may become the possession of real owners, and be made instrumental to the employment and sustentation of the people. Honorable gentlemen opposite may fancy themselves interested in maintaining the present system, but there is surely no interest they can have in it which will weigh against the safety and prosperity of Ireland." The Plato of England—John Stuart Mill, writes:—"The land of Ireland, like the land of every other country, belongs to the people who inhabit it; and when the inhabitants of a country quit it in tens of thousands because the government does not leave them room to live in it, that government is already judged and condemned." In 1858, the London Times wrote:—"For generations the proprietors of the land in Ireland have been Spartans among a belot peasantry—almost planters among negro slaves."

BY FATAL LEGISLATION

the Highlands of Scotland were cleared of their population to give place to the deer-stalking grounds of noble men. For the same cause the boasted yeomanry of England has disappeared in the stunted, squalid, poverty-stricken denizen of a manufacturing city, while thousands of acres which should be his to till are enclosed as the pleasure grounds of the wealthy.

The English landlords fear Home Rule, for they know that when once it is granted, all the energies of the Irish race will be turned towards righting the system of land laws in Ireland; and when the people obtain justice there, the democracy of England will also claim their rights. Thus the whole remnant of the outrageous feudal tenure of land in England will disappear. The laws of primogeniture and entail will be swept away; the power to deprive people of their natural right to live on the land of their birth by enormous rents or other causes will be seriously disturbed, and this is why the House of Lords in England and all the petty lordlings out of it, and all the great land monopolists in Great Britain, are madly opposed to Home Rule for Ireland. I firmly believe that the settlement of this Irish question will be the forerunner of the proper regulation of many great social problems of the world, such as the misery and degradation and ever-increasing poverty of a few, making them a danger to the state. So, in pleading the cause of Ireland to-night, I am pleading also the cause of the wretched crofters of Scotland, the claims of Scottish and English peasantry to more extended rights of freedom—the cause of the oppressed democracies of Germany, of Russia, and of India—the rights of labor the wide world over to a proper return for its toil—the rights of the great majority of mankind against the privileged few in every land who have assumed to crush and oppress the masses.

With these great questions, I claim, is the cause of Home Rule for Ireland closely linked. Home Rule is, in fact, in the van of these great social reforms. But it is inherently worthy your approval, because it has all the claims of right and justice on its side.

The flag of Ireland has long been trampled in the dust. The Harp and the Shamrock, the golden sunburst on the field of living green—emblems of a country without nationality—standard of a people downtrodden and oppressed—and yet they are the types of hope, of ever-springing hope, of light and life! I firmly believe that that standard and its emblems will soon be raised aloft over the Emerald Isle, by the hands of the British people, and that the Harp of Erin will sound the sweetest notes in the harmonies of a united and satisfied British Empire.

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